

PATHS AND GOALS OF SPIRITUAL HUMAN BEINGS

DR. RUDOLF STEINER

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The Christmas Festival in the Changing Course of Time

My Dear Friends:

When we wander at this time of year through the streets of large cities, we find them full of all sorts of things which our contemporaries want to have for their celebration of the approaching Christmas festival. Indeed, it is one of the greatest festivals of the year which humanity can celebrate: the festival which commemorates the most powerful impulse in the evolution of mankind. And yet, if we contemplate what will take place in the coming days in large cities such as ours, we may well ask: Does all of this correspond rightly to what is meant to flow through the souls and hearts of man?

If we don't give ourselves up to illusions but simply face the truth, then perhaps we cannot help but admit to ourselves: All these preparations and celebrations of the Christmas festival which we see in our time fit in very poorly on the one hand with all other happenings of modern civilization around us; and on the other hand they fit in equally poorly with what should live in the depth of the human heart as a commemorative thought of the greatest impulse which humanity received in the course of its evolution.

So it is perhaps no overstatement if we express the following view: There is a lack of harmony in what our eyes perceive, when we wish to permeate ourselves with the Christmas mood, and wish to receive this Christmas mood

from what we can see in today's environment. There is a discord in seeing the streets bedecked with Christmas trees and other decorations in preparation for the festival, and then seeing modern traffic rushing through the midst of it all. And if modern man does not feel the full extent of this discord, the reason may well be that he has disaccustomed himself to be sensitive to all the depth and intimacy which can be connected with this approaching festival. Of all that the Christmas festival can do to deepen man's inner nature, basically no more is left today, especially for the city dweller, than a last faint echo. He is hardly in a position to feel even vaguely its former greatness. His habits prevent him from perceiving this greatness any longer, a greatness to which humanity had become accustomed in the course of centuries.

It would be totally wrong if we would look with pessimism at the fact that times have changed, and that in our modern cities it has become impossible to develop that mood of profound intimacy which prevailed in earlier times with regard to this festival. It would not be right to allow such a pessimistic mood to arise, for at the same time we can feel an intimation — in our circles this feeling should certainly be present — that humanity can once again come to experience the full depth and greatness of the impulse which belongs to this festival. Seeking souls have every reason to ask themselves: "What can this 'Christ festival' mean to us?". And in their hearts they can admit: Precisely through Spiritual Science something will

be given to humanity, which will bring again, in the fullest sense of the word, that depth and greatness which cannot be any more today. If we don't succumb to illusion and phantasy we must admit that these can no longer exist at present. What has become often a mere festival of gifts cannot be said to have the same meaning as what the Christmas festival meant to people for many centuries in the past. Through the celebration of this festival the souls used to blossom forth with hope-filled joy, with hope-borne certainty, and with the awareness of belonging to a spiritual Being, Who descended from Spiritual heights, and united Himself with the earth, so that every human soul of good will may share in His powers. Indeed, for many centuries the celebration of this festival awakened in the souls of men the consciousness that the individual human soul can feel firmly supported by the spiritual power just described, and that all men of good will can find themselves gathered together in the service of this spiritual power. Thereby they can also find together the right ways of life on earth, so that they can mean humanly as much as possible to one another, so that they can love each other as human beings on earth as much as possible.

Suppose we find it appropriate to let the following comparison work on our souls: What has the Christmas festival been for many centuries, and what should it become in the future? To this end, let us compare, on the one hand, the mood which social custom creates nowadays in certain

parts of the world around us, with the mood that once permeated the Christmas festival. On the other hand, let us compare this mood of the present time with what can come about in the soul as a renewal of this festival, made as it were timeless, through Spiritual Science.

For a modern urban dweller it is hardly possible to appreciate truly the full depth of what is connected with our great seasonal festivals. It is hardly possible to experience that magic which like a gentle breeze permeated the mood of soul of those who believed that they bore the Christ in their hearts during the great festivities surrounding Christmas or Easter. Today it has become very difficult indeed, especially for the city dweller, to sense anything of this magic, which permeated humanity like a gentle spiritual breeze during those seasons. For those who have had the opportunity of experiencing even a little of this magic wind which permeated the soul mood in those times this will most certainly be a wonderful, glorious memory. As a young child I was able to behold the last remnants of such a magic wind as it permeated the souls, the mood, of country folk in certain remote German villages. When the Christmas season approached I could behold how something arose in the deepest, innermost soul life of young and old, which differed essentially from the feelings and sentiments that prevailed during the rest of the year. When Christmas approached this could still be sensed quite distinctly in certain farming villages

as recently as a few decades ago. The souls had then a natural way of making themselves inwardly beautiful. And they really felt something like this: "Into deepest night-enveloped darkness has the physical sunlight descended during autumn. More outer physical darkness has come about. Long have the nights become, shortened are the days. We must stay home much of the time. During the other seasons we used to go outside, to the fields, where we would feel the golden rays of the morning sun coming to meet us, where we could feel the warmth of the sun, where we could work with our hands during the long days of summer. But now, we must sit inside much of the time, we must feel much, much darkness around us, and we must often see, as we look outside through windows, how the earth is being covered with its winter garment."

It is not possible to depict in detail all the beautiful, the wonderful soul moods which awoke in the simplest farm homes on Sunday afternoons and evenings as the Christmas season approached. One would have to depict very intimate soul moods. One would have to tell how many, who had been involved in a good share of fights and mischief during the rest of the year, would feel a natural restraint in their souls, as a result of being filled with the thought: "The time of Christ draws near." They would feel: Time itself is becoming too holy to allow mischief to occur during this season. — That is only a minor aspect of what was extensively present in past

centuries, and what could still be seen in its last remnants in those remote villages in recent decades. When the celebration of Christmas retreated into the homes as a family festival you would see there no more than a little display representing the stable in Bethlehem. The children would enjoy everything connected with it, as they saw Joseph and Mary, with the shepherds in front, and the angels above, sometimes done in a very primitive way. In some villages you would find such a display of the “manger” in almost every home. What had thus retreated into the homes was more or less a last echo of something which we will touch upon later.

— And when the main days of the Christmas festival, the 25th and 26th of December, had passed and Epiphany, the festival of the Three Kings, approached, you could still see a few decades ago small groups of actors wandering from village to village — the last actors to present plays of “the Holy Story.” The actual Christmas plays had already become quite rare, but a last echo of “The Play of the Three Kings” could often still be seen, as it might be even today (1910) in some remote villages. There were the “Three Holy Kings”, wearing strange costumes, different for each one, with paper crowns and a star on their heads. Thus would they move through the villages, seldom lacking humor, but with humor and reverence together. With their primitive voices they would awaken all those feelings which the soul should feel in connection with what the Bible tells of the great Christ Impulse of human evolution.

The essential thing is that a *mood* prevailed during the Christmas season, the days and weeks surrounding the Christmas festival, to which the heart was given over, a mood in which the whole village would participate, and which enabled people to take in with simple immediacy all the representations that were brought before their souls. Grotesque, comedy-like presentations of sacred scenes, such as have become customary in our time in imitation of the Passion Plays of Oberammergau, would have met with no understanding in those days. The memory and the thought of the great periods of humanity were then still alive. It would have been impossible to find anyone willing to experience the events of the Holy Night and of the Three Kings during any other days of the year. And it would have been just as impossible to accept the Passion story at any other time but Easter. People felt united with what spoke to them from the stars, the weeks, the seasons, what spoke out of snow and sunshine. And they listened to tales of what they wanted to feel and should feel, when the so-called “Star-Singers” went around, wearing paper crowns on their heads, and lately wearing simply a white jacket. One of them used to carry a star, attached to a scissor-like device, so that he could project the star some distance out. Thus they would wander through the villages, stopping at various homes, to present their simple tales. What mattered most was that just at this time people’s hearts were rightly attuned, so that they were able to take in everything that was supposed to permeate their souls

during this season. I myself have still heard quite a few times these “Star-Singers”, reciting their simple poems as they wandered through the villages, and this is for me still a beautiful memory. An example follows *:

In God’s Name now our tale begins.
From Orient came the Holy Kings.
They ride with speed on distant ways,
Four hundred miles in thirteen days.
They ride by Herod’s palace-walls
As Herod from his window calls:
Whither go ye, relax your speed!
To Bethlehem our journey does lead.
Ye Holy Three Kings be guests of mine,
I will draw plenty of beer and wine,
I will serve venison roast and fish;
To know of the newborn king is my wish.
In truth, we cannot tell just where;
We have to follow the star we bear:
Over the house the star will shine bright.
Over the mountains the holy men ride.
There found they Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Who is the Savior of all the world.

*From “Deutsche Weihnachtspiele aus Ungarn”, described and communicated by Karl Julius Schröer, Vienna, 1862, “Oberschützener Sternsinger” (The Star-Singers of

Oberschützen), p. 160.

The whole village would take part in such things. As certain lines were recited the star would be projected far out. This star of Christmas, of the Three Kings, was an expression of the consonance of the season, the festivity, and the human hearts. That was a great thing, which had spread through centuries like a magic breath of air over large parts of the earth and into the simplest hearts and minds. We must try to place something like this before our souls. As seekers after spiritual knowledge we are able to do so, because through our years of contemplative work on this great event we were able to develop again a feeling for the real power which was thereby given for all of mankind and for the whole evolution of the earth. And it is to this event that our thoughts should be directed during this festival season.

So we may expect to gain some understanding of how in times past the whole Christmas season was immersed in a festive mood, especially among the people of Germany and Western Europe, and how this festive mood was achieved by the simplest means. But perhaps only the spiritual seeker can understand today what was essential in those ancient Christmas plays. What I have presented to you just now as the “Star-Song” is, in fact, only a last remnant, a last ruin. If we would go back several centuries we would find vast regions where Christmas plays were performed when this

time approached, in the presentation of which entire villages took part. As regards our knowledge of these Christmas plays we may well say that we were merely in a position of collecting something that was rapidly vanishing.

I myself had the good fortune of having an old friend who was such a collector. From him I heard many stories of what he encountered as a scholarly collector of Christmas plays, especially in German-Hungarian regions. In certain “language islands” in Hungary the German language had been kept alive both as a mother tongue and for colloquial speech, up to the time of the so-called magyarization in the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century, when the Hungarian language was imposed. There one could still find many of the Christmas plays and Christmas customs which had vanished long ago into the stream of oblivion in the German motherland. Individual colonists, who migrated into Slavic regions during the previous centuries, had preserved their ancient heritage of Christmas plays, and they renewed them, whenever they could find the right people to play the parts, always recruiting the players from among the villagers themselves. I can still well remember — and perhaps you will take my word for it — with how much enthusiasm the old professor *Schröer* spoke of these Christmas plays, when he told of having been present when these people performed these plays during the festival season.

We can say without exaggerating, that an understanding of the inner nature of the artistic element in these plays can only be reached by actually visiting these village people and witnessing how they have given birth to the simple artistry of such Christmas plays out of a truly *most holy mood*. There are people today, who believe that they can learn the art of speech and recitation from this or that teacher. They will go to all sorts of places in order to learn certain breathing exercises which are considered to be the right ones for this purpose. And there exist nowadays dozens of “right” breathing methods for singing and for declamation. These people believe that it is essential for them to make a real automaton of their body or their larynx. Thus they cultivate art in a materialistic way. I would only hope that this strange view will never really take root in our circles; for these people have no idea how a simple, yet true art was born out of a most reverent mood, a prayerful Christmas mood.

Such art was actually performed by village lads who engaged in good-for-nothing pranks and behaved in a very loose way during the rest of the year. These very same lads would act in the Christmas plays with a most profound Christmas mood in their souls and hearts. For, these simple people, who lived beneath their thatched roofs, knew infinitely more about the relation of the human soul, even the whole human being, and art, than is known today in our modern theaters or other art institutions, no matter how much ado

surrounds these things. They knew that true art has to spring from the whole human being; and if it be sacred-art then it must spring from man's holy mood of devotion. That, indeed, these people knew! And this can be seen, for example, in the "four principle rules", found in those regions which Schröer could still visit.

As the months of October or November approached, in the regions of Upper Hungary, one person who knew the Christmas plays would gather those people who he felt were suitable to perform them. These plays were passed on by oral tradition. They were never committed to writing. That would have been considered a profanation. And during the Christmas season some people were considered suited, of whom one would perhaps not have thought so at other times: really roguish good-for-nothing lads, who had been involved in all sorts of mischief during the rest of the year. But during this time of the year their souls immersed themselves in the required mood. The participants had to abide by some very strict rules during the many weeks of rehearsals. Anyone who wanted to take part had to adhere strictly to the following rules. — Try to imagine life in these villages, and what it would mean not to be allowed to participate in these Christmas plays. "Anyone wishing to act in the plays must:

tay away from the girls,

ing no bawdy songs during the entire Holy Season,

and a decent life,
beyond my orders.

A fine will be levied for all violations, and also for each error in memorizing your lines.”*

* See “Weihnachtsspiele aus altem Volkstum; Die Oberufer Spiele” (G.A. 43, Dornach 1965), Christmas Plays from Oberufer, translated by A.C. Harwood, Rudolf Steiner Press, London.

Do you recognize in this custom something like a last echo of the kind of consciousness that prevailed at the holy sites of the ancient mysteries? There too, one knew that wisdom cannot be achieved by mere schooling. Likewise, an awareness prevailed here that the whole human being, including his mind and morals, must be cleansed and purified, if he wished to partake in art in a worthy way. These plays had to be born out of the whole human being! And the attunement to the Christmas mood brought about something like this, brought about that devotion and piety would take hold even of the most roguish lads.

These Christmas plays, of which I have just told you, and which Schröer and others could still observe and collect, were the last remains of more ancient plays, indeed, merely the last ruins. But through these plays we can look back into earlier

times, into the 16th, 15th, 14th century and even further, when the relations between villages and cities were quite different. Indeed, in the Christmas season the souls of village people would immerse themselves into an entirely different mood through what these plays would offer them, as they presented with the simplest, most primitive means the holy legend: the birth of Christ with all that belongs to it according to the Bible. And just as Christmas day, the 25th of December, was preceded in the church calendar by the “Day of Adam and Eve”, so what was considered the actual Christmas play was preceded by the so-called *Paradise play*, the play of Adam and Even in Paradise, where they fell victim to the devil, the snake. Thus in the most primitive regions where such plays were performed, people could gain an immediate insight into the connection between the descent of man from spiritual heights to the physical world — and that sudden reversal which was bestowed on man through the Christ Impulse, upward again towards the spiritual worlds.

Suppose when reading the Epistles of St. Paul you would sense the greatness of the Pauline conception of man, who descended as Adam from the spiritual world to the world of the senses, and then, of the “new Adam and *Christ*, in whom man ascends again from the world of the senses into the world of the spirit. This can be sensed and felt in Paul in a grandiose way. The simplest people, even down to the children, could sense this in an intimate, loving, fulfilling way

in the depth of their hearts and souls when they beheld in this season in succession first the fall of man in the Paradise play of Adam and Eve, and then the revelation of Christ in the Christmas play. And they felt profoundly the mighty turning point that had occurred in the evolution of humanity through the Christ Event. A *reversal* of the path of evolution, that was the way the Christ Event was experienced! One path, that led so to say from heaven to earth, was the path from Adam to Christ; another path, that leads from earth to heaven, is the oath from Christ to the end of earth time. That is what many thousands of people felt in a most intimate way, when the two plays which I have just characterized were so primitively performed before their eyes. These people really could then experience the complete *renewal* of the human spirit in its very essence through the Christ-Impulse. Perhaps you can feel in all of this a kind of echo of something that was once felt in regard to this reversal of the entire progress of humanity through certain words which have come down to us from very ancient times, from the first Christian centuries. These words were often spoken, even in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, in those regions of Europe where Christianity had spread. There people felt something tremendous when words such as these were spoken:

Ave (I greet you) star of the sea

Divine youthful mother*

And virgin eternal

Thou happy portal of heaven.

Receiving this “Ave” (greeting)
From the mouth of Gabriel
Be thou our foundation for peace
By reversing the name Eva!

* A more conventional translation of alma is ‘bountiful’, but Rudolf Steiner translates it as ‘young’.

When these words were spoken people felt man’s path from heaven to earth through the Fall — and the ascent of man through Christ from earth to heaven. They felt this even in the names of the two female characters, the name Eva (Eve) and the name they associated with the mother of Jesus, with which one greeted her so to say: Ave! Ave is the reverse of the name *Eva*. When you spell *Ave* backwards you have *Eva*. That was felt in its full significance. These words express what people sensed in the most elementary phenomena of nature, and at the same time, what they saw in the human elements of the Holy Legend:

Ave, star of the sea,
Divine young mother
And virgin eternal
Thou happy portal of heaven.

Receiving this “Ave”
As a greeting from Gabriel
Be thou our foundation for peace

By reversing the name *Eva!*

In such simple words one felt the greatest mysteries, the greatest secrets of human evolution. And in the reversal of the name Eva to Ave people would feel in a subtle way that same truth which we can learn in a grandiose way from the Epistles of Paul when we read his words about Adam, the “old” Adam, and Christ, the “new” Adam. This was the mood in the days of the Christ-festival when these plays were performed one after the other in that primitive way: the “Paradise play” which shows us the Fall of man, and the “Christmas play” which awakens the hope for the future, in which each single human soul can share by taking up the force that lies in the Christ-Impulse. But it should be perfectly clear that to feel this requires a mood, an inner attunement, which simply cannot exist in this way anymore today. Times have changed. Back then it was not as impossible to look towards the spiritual worlds as it is today. For, that fundamentally materialistic trait, which permeates today the minds of the simplest as well as the most sophisticated people did not exist then. In those times the spiritual world was accepted as self-evident. And likewise a certain understanding was present of this spiritual world and how it differs from the world of the senses. Today people can hardly conceive how one could feel spiritually as late as the 15th or 16th century, and how an awareness of spirituality was present essentially everywhere.

We intend to present such a Christmas play in our art center. It is one from the region known as the Upper Palatinate (Oberpfalz). If we succeed, understanding can again be awakened, also in the outer world, for the spiritual mood that lives in such plays. For us, certain lines in such a Christmas play should become signposts, as it were, by which we recognize the spiritual sensitivity of the people who were to understand the Christmas play at the festival season. For example, if in one or another Christmas play Mary, expecting the Jesus-child, says, "The time has come, I see a little child", this means she clairvoyantly beheld the child in a vision in the days preceding the birth. Thus it is in many Christmas plays. And I wonder where you could find a similar tale today for such an occasion. The time when a conscious connection with the spiritual world was present is no more. You should appreciate this fact neither with optimistic nor with pessimistic feelings. Nowadays you would have to go very far afield, to the most remote and primitive rural areas, to find instances of a vision of the child that is to be born in a few days. But it does still happen!

What people brought to the Christmas season by these primitive memories and thoughts of the greatest event of human evolution, this could only be carried by a mood such as we described. Therefore, we must find it quite understandable that in the place of this former poetry, this simple primitive art, we have today the prose of electric

railways and automobiles, speeding forth so grotesquely between rows of Christmas trees. An aesthetically sensitive eye must find it impossible to view these two kinds of things together: Christmas trees, Christmas sales, and cars and electric trains running through their midst! Today this impossible situation is naturally accepted as a matter of course. But for an aesthetically sensitive eye it remains nevertheless something impossible. Even so, we want to be friends of our civilization, not enemies. We want to understand that it must be so as a matter of course.

But we want to understand too how much this is connected with the materialistic trait which has pervaded not only those who live in the city, but those who live in the country as well. Oh, by listening carefully, we can actually detect how this materialistic mood has taken hold of human minds. When we go back to the 14th or 13th century we find that people knew full well that something spiritual is meant when such a thing as the tree of knowledge in paradise is mentioned. They understood rightly what was presented in the Paradise play. When they were shown the tree of knowledge or the tree of life they knew to what to relate it spiritually. For in those days superstition about such matters had not yet spread to the extent it did later, in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. In fact it can be historically documented that already in the 15th century, in the vicinity of the city of Bamberg, people went out into the apple orchards on Christmas night because they

expected to see physically, materially, that a specially chosen apple tree would bloom that night. Thus people's minds became materialistic, in the period beginning in the 13th or 14th century and extending into the 16th and 17th century. This happened not only in the cities, but also in the souls of simple country folk.

Even so, much of the ancient poetry found its way into the homes, with the Christmas tree. But what wafted through the ancient villages as a most sacred mood, like a mystery, has become merely external poetry, the poetry of the Christmas tree, still beautiful, yet merely an echo of something much greater.

Why is this so? Because in the course of time humanity must evolve, because what is most intimate, what is greatest and most significant at one time, cannot remain so in the same way for all times. Only an enemy of evolution would want to drag what was great in one time over into other times. Each period of time has its own special mission. In each period we must learn how to enliven in ever new ways what should enter the souls and hearts of man. Our time can only appreciate that real Christmas mood, which I have sketched here in brief outline, if this mood is seen as a historic memory, a thing of the past. Yet, if we do accept the symbol of the Christmas tree also into our own festival gatherings, we do so precisely because we connect with Spiritual Science the

thought of a *new* Christmas mood of mankind, of progressively evolving mankind. For Spiritual Science means to introduce the secrets of Christ into the hearts and souls of man in a way that is appropriate for our time. Even though modern conveyances rush past us when we step outdoors, or perhaps will even fly away with us through the air — and soon these things will awaken humanity quite differently to the most sobering and terrifying prose — nevertheless men of today must have a chance to find again the divine-spiritual world, precisely by an even stronger and more meaningful deepening of the soul. This is the same divine-spiritual world which in bygone centuries appeared before the eyes of those primitive minds when they saw at Christmas time the Holy Child in the manger. Today we need other means to awaken this mood in the soul. Certainly we may like to immerse ourselves in what past times possessed as ways to find the Christ Event, but we must also transcend what depends on time. Ancient people approached the secrets of Nature by merging with her through feeling. That was only possible in a primitive time. Today we need other means.

I would still like to give you some idea *how* people felt their way into nature when the Christmas festival approached. They did this quite primitively, yet they could speak in a very real and living way out of their sensing and feeling of the elements of Nature. If I may share with you a little “Star Song”, you will perhaps feel only through one single line, how

the *elements of Nature* spoke out of the soul — the rest of the song is rather primitive. But if you listen more carefully you will be able to observe this Nature mood in several other lines.

Namely, when the one who gathered his actors for the Christmas play, or for the Three Kings play, would wander with them, and when they would then perform at some place, they would first extend a greeting to those who were assembled there. For, the sort of abstract attitude which prevails today between actors and audience did not exist in those earlier times. People belonged together, and the whole gathering was enveloped by an atmosphere of community. Therefore the actors would start by greeting in a primitive way those who were present, as well as those of the community who were not there. This really would bring out the Christmas mood.

The Star-Song

The star singer:
Beloved singers mine, let's gather as a clan
Like fritters in a frying pan,
Beloved singers mine, take up your place,
We want to pass our while with singing in this space.
Beloved singers mine, so strong and smart,
With greetings do we want to start.
Let us greet God-Father on His highest throne
And let us greet also His only Son.

Let us greet the Holy Spirit by name
And then greet all three together again.

Joseph and Mary enter the stage.

Let us greet Joseph and Mary mild,
And we also greet the little child.
Let us greet the ox and also the ass,
Which stand near the crib with straw and grass.
Let us greet them through sunlight and moonshine
That shine on the sea and the river Rhine.
Let us greet them through foliage and grassy blade,
Through the holy rain that has wet us all made.
Let us greet the emperor and his crown,
And him who made it, a master of great renown.
Let us greet the squire, Sir Palfi by name,
Also his officers we greet the same.
Let us greet our fathers of the church, so stern,
Because this play they allowed us to learn.
Let us greet the judge and the jury elect
With worthy honor and respect.
The whole honored community we greet
All who together here we meet.
Let us greet the honored council of this place
By God ordained to serve in this space.
Let us greet them through the roots, large and small,
Which are in the earth, many and all.

Beloved singers mine, turn now to another thing.
To greet the star we shall now sing.
Let us greet the slats, so carefully matched,
To which our star is then attached.
Let us greet the scissors that can stretch out far
By which can wander around the star.
We greet all the little slats of wood
As many as make our star look so good.
Beloved singers mine, harken well to my words
We sang to the star and to all of its parts.
Now we greet our master singer with glee
And also his hat which here you see.
Let us greet our teacher, who indeed,
With God's help taught us what we need.
Beloved singers mine, note well this thing,
To all of these we did now sing.

Now I ask you, please notice what this means: to call upon Nature in such a way that one greets everyone whom one wishes to greet with a certain mood in one's heart, a mood which arises from: "the roots, large and small, which are in the earth, many and all." That is empathy for Nature's own mood. — Thus we must recognize that people in those days were connected with all that was holy, with all that was great and spiritual, right down to the roots of trees and grass. If you can enter into such a feeling, then, through a line such as the one I have just cited, you will feel something grandiose in the

secrets of the evolution of mankind. The times are past when such feelings were naturally present, when they were a matter of course. Today we need to make use of other means. We need ways which will lead us to a well-spring in human nature that lies deeper, to a wellspring of human nature which, in a certain sense, is independent of external time. For the course of modern civilization makes it impossible for us to be bound by the seasons. Therefore, if you truly understand the mood which was felt in olden times as the Christ mood of the holy Christmas night, you will also be able to understand our intent, as we attempt to deepen artistically what we can gain from Spiritual Science. We strive to enliven that well-spring in the human mind which can take in the Christ Impulse. No longer can we awaken this great impulse directly within our souls during the Christmas season, even though we would be happy if we could. Yet we constantly search for it. If we can see a "Christ-festival of the progress of humanity" in what Spiritual Science is intended to be for mankind, and if we compare this with what simple people could feel when the Child in the crib was displayed during the Holy Christmas Night then we must say to ourselves: Such moods and feelings can awake in us too, if we consider what can be born in our own soul when our inner-most wellspring is so well attuned to what is sacred, so purified through spiritual knowledge, that this wellspring can take in the holy mystery of the Christ Impulse.

From this point of view we also try to discover true art which springs from the spirit. This art can only be a child of true devotion, a child of the most sacred feelings, when we feel in this context the eternal, imperishable “Christ festival of humanity”: How the Christ-Impulse can be born in the human soul, in the human heart and mind. When we learn to experience again through Spiritual Science that this Christ Impulse is a reality, something which can actually flow into our souls and hearts as a living strength, then the Christ Impulse will not remain something abstract or dogmatic. Rather this Christ Impulse, which comes forth from our spiritual movement, will become something able to give us solace and comfort in the darkest hours of our lives, able also to give us joy in the hope that when Christ will be born in our soul at the “Christmastide of our soul”, we may then look forward to the *Eastertide*, the resurrection of the spirit in our own inner life.

In this way we must progress, from a material attitude which has entered and taken hold of all minds and hearts, towards a spiritual attitude. For, that renewal, which is necessary to counterbalance today’s prosaic ways of life, can only be born out of the spirit. Outside, the traffic of cars may move by, electric trains may speed on, perhaps even balloons may fly across the sky. Nevertheless, in halls such as these, it will be possible that something of a holy mood lives and grows. This can however only happen as a result of what has flowed to us from spirit knowledge throughout the entire year. When this

fruit of the entire year brings Christ closer to us, as could happen in former times in a much more childlike mood, then we may rightly hope that in a certain sense these halls will be “*cribs*”. We may then look upon these halls in a similar way as the children and the grown-ups used to look on Christmas eve upon the cradle that was set up for them at home, or in still earlier times, in the church. They used to look at the little Child, at the shepherds before Him, and at “the ox and also the ass which stand near the crib with straw and grass”. They felt that from this symbol strength would stream into their hearts, for all hope, for all love of man, for all that is great in mankind, and for all goals of the earth. If on this day, which shall be consecrated and dedicated to remembering the Christ Impulse, we can feel that our earnest spiritual scientific striving throughout the entire year has kindled something in our hearts, then on this day our hearts will feel: “These our meeting halls are truly cradles! And these candles are symbols! And just as Christmas is a preparation for Easter, so these cradles, by virtue of the holy mood that fills them, and these candles, through the symbolism of their light, are meant to be a preparation for a great era for humanity, *the era of the resurrection of the most Holy Spirit, of truly spiritual life!*”

So let us try to feel that in this Christmas season our meeting halls are cradles, places in which, secluded from the outer world, something *great* is being prepared. Let us learn to feel that if we study diligently throughout the year, our

insights, our wisdom, can be condensed on Christmas eve into very warm feelings, which glow like a fire, fueled by what we have gained throughout the whole year by immersing ourselves into great teachings. And let us feel that thereby we nurture our remembrance of the greatest impulse in human evolution. Let us also feel, therefore, that in these halls we may have faith that what now begins to burn within such a confined cradle as a holy fire, and as a light, filled with certainty of hope, will find its way to all mankind at some future time. Then this fire and this light will be strong enough to extend its power even to the hardest, most down to earth prose of life, to permeate it, to enkindle it, to warm it, to enlighten it! Thus can we feel here the Christmas mood as a mood of hope in anticipation of that World-Easter-mood which is to express the living spirit, needed for a renewal of humanity.

We best celebrate Christmas when we fill our souls in the coming days with this mood: In our Christmas we spiritually prepare the “Easter festival of all mankind”, the resurrection of spiritual life. Yes indeed, cradles shall our places of work become at Christmas time! The child of light is to be born, whom we have nurtured throughout the entire year by immersing ourselves into the wisdom-treasures of Spiritual Science. In our places of work *Christ is to be born within the human soul*, in order that spiritual life may be resurrected at the great Eastertide of humanity. In its very essence humanity

must come to feel spirituality as a resurrection, by virtue of what streams forth as Christmas mood from our halls into all humanity, in the present time as well as in the future.

Yuletide and the Christmas Festival

By receiving the Spirit the human soul develops to ever further stages in the course of cosmic existence. The Spirit is eternal, but the way in which it takes effect, how it manifests in what man can feel, love and create on Earth — that is new in every epoch.

When we think in this way of the Spirit and its progressive manifestation in the course of man's existence, the Eternal and the Transitory are revealed to our eyes of soul. And in particular manifestations of life here and there, we can constantly perceive how the Eternal reveals itself, comes to expression in the Transitory and then vanishes again, thereafter to assert its reality in perpetually new forms.

And today too we can feel that the emblems of Christmas around us are reminiscent of past forms in which the Eternal, manifesting in the outer world, was wont to be symbolised. Certain it is that in the second half of December at the present time, when we go out into the streets of a great city and look at the lights that are intended to be invitations into the houses to celebrate the Christmas Festival, our aesthetic sense must be pained by displays of so-called Christmas goods, while inventions out of keeping with Christmas trees and Christmas symbols whiz past — motor cars, electric tramcars and the like. These phenomena, as experienced today, are utterly at

variance with each other. We feel this still more deeply when we realise what the Christmas Festival has become for many of those who want to be regarded in the great cities as the representatives of modern culture. It has become a festival of presents, a festival in which little remains of the warmth and profound depth of feeling which in a past by no means far distant surrounded this most significant season.

Among the experiences restored to us by our anthroposophical conception of the world and way of thinking, will certainly be the warmth of feeling that pervaded the human soul at the times of high festival in the ancient Church's year. We must learn to understand once again how necessary it is for our souls to become aware at certain times of the connection with the great Universe out of which man is born, in order that our intellectual, perceptive and also moral forces may be revitalised. There was an epoch when Christmas was a festival when all morality, all love, all philanthropy could be revived; in its symbols it radiated a warmth undreamed of by the dreariness and prosaicness of modern life. Nevertheless deep contemplation of these symbols could be a means of developing the perceptions, experiences and convictions of which we ourselves can be aware concerning the resurrection of mankind, the birth of the Spirit of Anthroposophy in our souls.

There is indeed a connection between the earlier

conceptions of the Festival of Christ's birth and the modern anthroposophical conceptions of the birth of truly spiritual ideas and ways of thinking, of the birth of the whole anthroposophical spirit in the cradle of our hearts; there is indeed a connection. And maybe it is the anthroposophist of today who will most readily enter into what for long ages was felt at the time of the Christmas Festival and could be felt again if there were any hope of something similar emerging from the atmosphere of materialism surrounding us today.

But if we want to experience the Christmas Festival in the truly anthroposophical way, we cannot limit ourselves to what the Christmas Festival was once upon a time or is now. Wherever we look in the world, and into a past however distant, something that can be compared to the thoughts and feelings connected with the Christmas Festival has existed everywhere. Today we will not go back to the very far past but only to the feelings and experiences which men living in the regions of Middle Europe might have had before the introduction of Christianity at the time of the year when our own Christmas Festival is drawing near. We will think briefly of epochs prior to the introduction of Christianity into Europe, when in regions subject to relatively harsh climatic conditions our forefathers in Europe were obliged to make their living by spending the summer as pastoral or agricultural workers, while their feelings and inclinations were intimately connected with the manifestations of the great world of Nature. They

were full of thanksgiving for the sun's rays, full of reverence for the great Universe — a reverence that was not superficial but deeply felt. And when the herdsman or cattle breeder of ancient Europe was out on his rough fields, often in scorching heat, he was inwardly aware not only of the outer, physical aspect of Nature, but in his whole being he felt intimately connected with whatever was radiated to him from Nature; with his whole heart he lived in communion with Nature. It was not only that in his eyes the physical rays of the sun were reflecting the light, but in his heart the sunlight kindled spiritual jubilation, summer-like exultation which culminated in the St. John's fires when the spirit of Nature shouted for joy and was echoed from the hearts of men. Intimate community was also felt with the animal world as being under man's guardianship.

Then came autumn, followed by the season of rigorous winter — and I am thinking now of times when winter swept through the land with a bleakness of which modern humanity has little idea. This was a time when, with the exception of what it was absolutely essential to preserve, the last head of cattle had to be slaughtered. All outer life was stilled; it was actually as though a kind of death made its way into the hearts of men, a kind of darkness, in contrast with the mood that pervaded these same hearts throughout the summer. Those were times when the unique manifestations of climate and of Nature, enabled echoes of ancient clairvoyance still to persist in Middle Europe. People who during the summer

were full of joy and merriment, as though Nature herself were rejoicing in their hearts — these same people could become inwardly quiescent during the time of approaching winter; their own souls could respond to an echo of the mood that pervades a man when, unmindful of the outer world, he withdraws into his own inner world in order to become aware of the indwelling Divinity.

So it can be said that Nature herself made it possible for these ancient European peoples to descend from life in the external world deep down into their own inmost being. When November came near this descent into death and darkness was felt for weeks to be a solemn season, to be a harbinger of the approaching dawn of what was called the Yuletide Festival. This mood was a clear indication of how long the remembrance of ancient clairvoyant faculties had persisted among all the peoples of Northern and Middle Europe. During the season following the period roughly corresponding to our months of January and February, men felt inwardly aware of the portents of renewed rejoicing, renewed resurrection in Nature. They were aware of a foretaste of what they would subsequently experience in the external world; but when the fields were still covered with snow, when icicles were still hanging from the trees, when outside in Nature nothing indicated a future state of exultation, there was a persistent condition of withdrawal into themselves, of inner repose which was ultimately transformed in the soul in such a way that a

man was, as it were, liberated from his own selfhood.

This intermediate state experienced by our forefathers at the approach of the season we now call spring was felt by them somewhat as the clairvoyant feels his astral body, before that astral body is completely cleansed and purified. It was as if the spiritual horizon were filled with all kinds of animal forms. And those men tried to give expression to this. For them it represented a transition from the profound, festival mood of approaching winter to the mood which would again pervade the soul during summer. And they imitated in symbols what the astral body reveals, imitated it in the form of uninhibited games and dances; by donning animal masks they imitated this transition from a state of complete inner repose to a state of exultant abandonment to great Nature.

When we ponder over this, when we reflect that the hearts and minds of peoples over wide areas were completely given up to such a mood, then we understand that there was present on this soil the feeling of sinking down into the outer physical darkness, into the outer physical death of Nature; we also understand the deep, persistent feeling that in sinking down into the physical death of Nature, into physical darkness, the supreme light of the Spirit can be revealed; and how the experience of being submerged in physical death is directly transformed into that mood of unbridled abandonment to which expression can be given by animal masks,

unrestrained dancing and music. Admittedly there was not yet any fully developed feeling that if a human being is to find the highest light he must seek for it in the deepest depths of being; but through an inner, loving union with the weaving forces of Nature a soil was prepared into which there could be planted a knowledge to be imparted to men concerning their further evolution through the power of the Christ Impulse. To these peoples living all over Europe it was only necessary to say — not in dry, abstract words but speaking to the heart by means of symbols: 'Where you plunge into darkness, into the death of outer Nature, there — if you have prepared your souls to perceive and feel rightly, you can find an eternal, imperishable Light. And this Light has been brought into the evolution of mankind through the quickening power of the Mystery of Golgotha, through the events in Palestine'.

It is characteristic of the centuries immediately following, that in Europe the warmest, most intimate feelings for the Christ Impulse were to be kindled by the thought of the Christ Child, by the birth of the Christ Child. And if we believe that mankind has a mission, what conception must we have of that mission? We must conceive that man has a divine-spiritual origin, that he can look back to that origin, but that he has descended farther and farther away from it, has become more and more closely interwoven with physical matter, with the outer physical plane. But we must also be aware that through the mighty Impulse which we call the Christ Impulse, man can

overcome the forces that led him down into the physical world and tread the path upwards into the heights of spiritual life.

Having grasped this we must say to ourselves: as the human Ego is today, incarnated in a physical body, it has descended from divine-spiritual heights of existence and feels entangled with the world of the outer physical plane. But this Ego that has become sinful is rooted in another Ego, a guiltless Ego. Where then, does the Ego that is not yet interwoven with the physical world contact us? At the point when, looking back in memory over our life as it takes its course between birth and death, we come to the moment in our early years when consciousness of our Ego dawned for the first time. The Ego is there, although we are not aware that it is living and active within us, even when there is no realisation of Egohood at all. The Ego looks into the surrounding world, is interwoven with the physical plane even before there is any consciousness of Egohood. In its childlike, innocent state the Ego is nevertheless present and may hover before us as an ideal to be regained, but permeated then with everything that can be experienced in this school of physical life on the Earth. And so, although it will inevitably be difficult for the prosaic intellect to find words in which to clothe it, this ideal can be felt by warm human hearts: 'Become what your Ego is before there is any concept of it! Become what you could be if you were to find your way to the Ego of your childhood! Then that Ego will shine into everything acquired

by the Ego of your later years!'— And inasmuch as we feel this to be an ideal, it shines before us in Jesus of Nazareth, in whom the Christ subsequently became incarnate.

Experiences such as these enable us to understand that an impulse promoting growth and development could move the hearts of the simplest people all over Europe when they contemplated the incarnation of the Being who was afterwards able to receive the Christ into himself. So we realise that it was truly a step forward when feelings connected with the Festival of the birth of Jesus were inculcated into experiences connected with the old Yuletide Festival. It was indeed a mighty step forward and may perhaps best be characterised by saying that in those dark days, when souls gathered together in order to prepare for the rejoicings of the new summer — in that darkness the light of Christ Jesus was kindled!

An echo of what took place among European peoples in those early times still persists in the Christmas Plays which during the nineteenth century, or at any rate during its latter half, had become little more than objects of study for learned investigators and for collectors. During the Middle Ages, however, these Plays were already being performed in a characteristic style during the Christmas period. All the emotions, all the vitality kindled in souls living in the regions where, when Yuletide was approaching, people of an even

earlier period had experienced what I have been describing — all these feelings were awakened by the Plays. And as we turn from the description of the old Yuletide Festival to the medieval Christmas Plays, we ourselves can realise what warmth swept through the European peoples with the advent of Christianity. An impulse of a unique kind penetrated then into the hearts and souls of men.

Conditions now are, of course, different from those of earlier times, and in the nineteenth century these Plays were regarded simply as perquisites of erudition. Nevertheless it was a moving experience to make the acquaintance of older philologists and authorities on Germanic mythology and sagas, men who with intense enthusiasm devoted profound study to whatever fragments remained of the Christmas Plays that were performed in different regions. I myself had an elderly friend who during the fifties and sixties of last century had been a Professor at a College in Pressburg and while there had devoted a great deal of time to research among the Germanic peoples who had been driven from Western to Eastern Hungary. He also admired the charming customs and the language of the now Magyarised German gypsies and of other folk living at that time in Northern Hungary. It came to his knowledge that early Christmas Plays were still performed in a village near Pressburg. And he — I am speaking of my old friend Karl Julius Schröer — went to the village in an attempt to discover what vestiges of these old Plays still

survived among the country people. Later on he told me a great deal about the wonderful impressions he had also received of what was left of Christmas Plays belonging to far, far earlier times.

In a certain village — Oberrufer was its name — there lived an old man in whose family it was an inherited custom when Christmas came near, to gather together those in the village who were suitable to be allotted parts in a Play in which the Gospels' story of Herod and the Three Kings would be presented in a simple way.

To understand the unique character of these Christmas Plays, however, we must have some idea of the kind of life led by simple folk in olden times. It now belongs to the past and must not be repeated. To make the gist of the matter clear, let me just put this question: Is there not a particular time of the year when the snowdrop flowers? Are there not for the lily-of-the-valley and for the violet particular seasons when they take their own places in the macrocosm? Certainly, under glass they can be made to flower at other periods but it really gives one pain to see a violet flowering at a time other than that which properly belongs to it. There is little feeling for such things in our day but something of the kind can be said about the people of earlier times. What men felt during certain periods of the Middle Ages at the approach of autumn and of Christmas, when the dark nights were drawing on apace,

what they felt in such a way that their intimate experiences were akin to the manifestations of Nature outside, akin to the snow and the snowflakes and the icicles forming on the trees — such feelings were possible only at the time of Christmas. It was a mood that imparted strength and healing power to the soul for the whole of the year. It renewed the soul, was a real and effective power. And how deeply one was moved a decade or so ago when the last indications of such feelings were still to be encountered here or there. From my own personal experience on the physical plane itself I can confirm that there were utterly good-for-nothing fellows who would not dare to be dissolute as the days shortened. At Christmastime those who were invariably the most quarrelsome, quarrelled less and those who quarrelled only now and then stopped quarrelling altogether. A real power was active in souls at that time of the year and these feelings abounded everywhere during the weeks immediately before the Holy Night.

What was it that people actually experienced during those weeks? Their experiences, translated into actual feelings, were that human beings had descended from a divine-spiritual existence to the deepest depth on the physical plane, that the Christ Impulse had been received and the direction of man's path reversed into one of reascent to divine-spiritual existence. That is what was felt in connection with everything to do with the Christ Event. Hence it was not only Christian happenings that people liked to present, but just as the

Church calendar couples Adam and Eve's day on 24 December with the birthday of Jesus on the 25th, a performance of the Paradise Play was followed directly by the Play presenting Christ's birthday, denoting the impulse given for man's reascent to divine-spiritual existence. And this was deeply felt when the name EVA resounded in the Paradise Play – EVA, the mother of humanity, from whom men had descended into the vale of physical life. This theme was presented on one day and on the next there was a Play depicting the impulse which brought about the reversal of man's path. This reversal was indicated in the actual sounds: AVE MARIA. AVE was felt to be the reversal of EVA: AVE-EVA. People were deeply stirred by words which rang out countless times to their ears and hearts from the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth centuries onwards, and which were understood.

Ave maris stella

Hail, star of the sea,

Dei mater alma

Nursing mother of God,

Atque semper
virgo

Virgin for ever and ever,

Felix coeli porta

Blissful door to the heavens
above.

Sumens illud Ave

Adopting that 'Ave'

Gabrielis ore

Out of the mouth of Gabriel,

Funda nos in pace

Establish us in peace

Mutans nomen
Evae!

Altering the name of 'Eva'.

It was felt that the Paradise Play must be performed in the mood of piety befitting the Holy Night of Christmas. This was a deep conviction, and as anthroposophists, when we hear how the performers in the Christmas Plays rehearsed, how they prepared themselves, how they behaved before and during the performances of the Plays, we may well say: Is this not reminiscent of the attitude to truth adopted in the Mysteries? — although that, admittedly, was a matter of even greater significance. We know that in the Mysteries truth could not be received in any superficial mood of soul. Those who are aware to some extent of the holiness of truth know how absurd it is to imagine that it could be found in the arid, prosaic lectures of modern times, lectures in which there is no longer any indication that truth must be sought by a pure, unsullied, well-prepared soul and that it will not be found by a soul inwardly unsanctified, whose feelings are not duly prepared for its reception. There is no longer any conception of this in our age of materialism when truth itself, in the way it is presented, has become utterly prosaic.

In the Mysteries, truth might be approached only after the soul had passed through probationary tests of purity, inner freedom and fearlessness. Are we not reminded of this when we hear of the old man whom Karl Julius Schröer had known, who while he was assembling his players demanded that they should observe the ancient rules. Anyone who has lived among village people knows what the first rule signifies. The first rule was that during the whole period of preparation none of the actors might visit a brothel. In the village this was a matter of tremendous importance, signifying that the task lying before the actors must be steeped in piety. Nobody, while he was rehearsing, might sing an unworthy song; that was another rule. Further, nobody should desire anything more than a good, honest livelihood. That was the third rule. And the fourth was that he who was the authentic guardian of the traditional Christmas Plays should in all things be obeyed. It was an office not willingly transferred to anyone else.

In the second half of the nineteenth century people collected these Plays, although by then the old feelings associated with them had vanished. Later on I myself came across indications of the piety and fervour of scholars who still had some contact with country folk living in the scattered provinces of Hungary, for example, and were collecting the old Plays and Songs. When I was once in Hermannstadt about Christmastime I found that the teachers at the Gymnasium (Grammar School) there had been busily

collecting these Plays and I came across the Herod Play. And so in the second half of the nineteenth century it was still possible to find people who were gathering evidence of old customs in regions which I have mentioned in connection with the Yuletide Festival. Do not let us think of anything theoretical but let us picture this warm, magical breath of the Christmas mood presented in these Plays. We then have a conception of mankind's belief in divine-spiritual reality — a belief acquired through the Christ Impulse.

This deep study of the Christmas Plays was something that could be highly instructive for the present age when the realisation that Art is the offspring of piety, of religion and of wisdom has long since been lost! In these days, when people are apt to regard Art as being detached from everything else, when Art has degenerated, for example, into formalism, much could be learnt from considering how Art in all its aspects was once regarded as a flower of human life. Simple as was the presentation of these Christmas Plays, it nevertheless indicated a flowering of man's whole nature. In the first place, the boys taking part in the Plays must be God-fearing, must absorb into their whole character something that was like an essence of the Christmas mood. They were also obliged to learn how to speak in strict rhythm. At the present time, when the Art of speaking in the ancient sense has been lost, there is no inkling of the vitally important role played by rhythm and rhyme, or of how every movement and gesture of men

otherwise accustomed only to handling flails were rehearsed in minutest detail. The actors devoted themselves for weeks on end to practising rhythm and intonation, and were wholly dedicated to what they were to present. For a true understanding of Art, much could be learnt from those customs today when we have forgotten to such an extent how to speak artistically that hardly more than the intellectual meaning of what we have to say is expressed. The essential charm of these old Christmas Plays, however, lay in the fact that in rhythm, intonation and gesture the whole man became articulate. It was indeed a significant experience to have witnessed even the last remnants of these customs.

When the Christmas days were over, the actors taking the parts of the Three Holy Kings walked through the villages, but at no other time than immediately after Christmas. I still remember seeing the Three Kings going through the villages from house to house. They carried long strips of lattice work attached to shears, a star being fixed to the end of the lattice work. The star shot out when the shears were opened and the lattice work swung back in harmony with the rhythmic movements made by the Three Kings. The Kings wore the most primitive costumes imaginable but their way of bringing the appropriate facts to the notice of the people at the right time of the year and their complete forgetfulness of self, induced a mood of soul that will be utterly incomprehensible to our age unless there can be a spiritual awakening. What

should awaken in us as the life of the spirit, transformed through Anthroposophy into Art, can be presented in Plays which transcend the normal standards of the present age. Such Plays will not necessarily be connected with festivals but will be concerned with what is eternal in the human soul, unrelated to any particular season.

The Christ Impulse that was a reality for the souls of a certain epoch could become for us a living experience. True, in a certain sense we are already deeply rooted in an age when materialism in the outer world has taken such a hold in every sphere that if this Christ Impulse is to be renewed, stimuli quite different from the simple methods employed in the Middle Ages are called for. A revitalisation of man's inner life is necessary. The goal of Anthroposophy should be to draw forth the deepest forces of the human soul, forces quite different from those indicated to us by the present Christmas symbols and customs. True as it is that through our Anthroposophy we can become aware of the breath of enchantment which filled men's hearts during performances of the Paradise and Christ-Plays and during all the experiences connected with the festival seasons, it behoves us also to face the other fact — that the eternal Spirit must live in ever new forms through the evolution of humanity. Hence the spectacle of the Christmas symbols should be an incitement to infuse into the Christmas mood the spirit of anthroposophical thinking. Those who have a right feeling of

the mysteries of the Christmas night will be filled with hope as they look forward to what will follow the Christmas Festival as a second Festival: they will look forward to Easter, the Festival of Resurrection, when He who was born in the Christmas night will be victorious.

Thus we are convinced that all cultural life, all spiritual life must be pervaded and inwardly charged with anthroposophical conceptions, anthroposophical feeling, thinking and willing. In the future, my dear friends, there will either be an anthroposophical spiritual science or no science at all, only a kind of applied technology; in the future there will either be a religion permeated with Anthroposophy, or no religion at all, merely external ecclesiasticism. In the future, Art will be permeated with Anthroposophy or the various arts will cease to exist, because cut off from the life of the human soul they can have only a brief, ephemeral existence. So we look towards something that shines with the same certainty as Theodora's prophecy of the renewal of the vision of Christ in the first Mystery Play, The Portal of Initiation. With as great a certainty there stands before our souls the resurrection of the anthroposophical spirit in Science, Religion, Art and in the whole life of humanity. The great Easter Festival of mankind is arrayed before our foreshadowing souls.

We can understand that still there are 'mangers', still lonely places in which there will be born, as yet in the form typical of

childhood, that which is to be resurrected among men. In the Middle Ages people were led into the houses and shown the manger — an imitation of the stable with the ox and the ass — where the Child Jesus lay near his parents and the shepherds, and the people looking on were told: There lies the hope for the future of mankind!

May all that we cultivate in our anthroposophical centres become in the modern age new mangers in which, under the guidance of the Being we call Christ Jesus, the new spirit may come to life. Today this new spirit is still at the stage of childhood, still being born as it were in the mangers which are the centres of anthroposophical activities, and bearing the pledge of victory — the pledge that we, as mankind, will celebrate the great Easter Festival, the Resurrection Festival of humanity in the new spirit which we already anticipate and for which we strive — the spirit of Anthroposophy.

On the Mystery Plays: Lecture I

Self-Knowledge Portrayed in the Rosicrucian Mystery, The Portal of Initiation

In relation to the Rosicrucian Mystery I should today like to speak about certain peculiarities of human self- knowledge. For this we will have to remind ourselves how the individuality living in the body of Johannes Thomasius brings about a characterization of himself. Therefore, I wish to start my lecture with a recitation of the scenes from the Rosicrucian Mystery that portray the self-knowledge of Johannes.

SCENE TWO

A place in the open; rocks and springs. The whole surroundings are to be thought of as within the soul of Johannes Thomasius. What follows is the content of his meditation.

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

Johannes For many years these words
of weighty meaning I have heard.
They sound to me from air and water;
they echo up from depths of earth.
And just as in the acorn secretly
the structure of the mighty oak is pressed,
within the power of these words
there is contained
all that my thought can comprehend

about the nature of the elements,
of souls as well as spirits,
of time and of eternity.
The world and my own nature
are living in the words:
O man, know thou thyself!

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

And now! — within me
it is becoming terribly alive.
Around me darkness weaves,
within me blackness yawns;
out of the world of darkness it resounds,
out of soul-blackness it rings forth: —
O man, know thou thyself!

(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.

And now it robs me of myself.
I change with every hour of the day.
I melt into the night.
The earth I follow in her cosmic course.
I rumble in the thunder,
I flash within the lightning,
I am. — But oh, I feel
already separated from my being.
I see my body's shell.
It is an alien being outside myself;
it is remote from me.
There hovers nearer now another body
and with its mouth I have to speak:

'He brought me bitter sorrow;
I gave him all my trust.
He left me in my grief alone.
He robbed me of the warmth of life
and thrust me deep into cold earth.'
She, whom I left, unhappy one,
I was now she herself,
and I must suffer her despair.
Self-knowledge lent me strength
to pour myself into another self.
O cruel words!
Your light is quenched by its own power.
O man, know thou thyself!

(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.

You guide me back again
into the spheres of my own being.
Yet how do I behold myself!
My human form is lost;
as raging dragon I must see myself,
begot of lust and greed.
I clearly sense
how an illusion's cloud
has hid from me till now
my own appalling form.
The fierceness of my being will devour me.
And running like consuming fire
through all my veins I feel those words,
which hitherto with elemental power
revealed to me the truth of suns and earths.
They live within my pulse,
they beat within my heart,
and even in my thought itself I feel

those unfamiliar worlds flare up as wild
desires.

This is the fruitage of the words:
O man, know thou thyself.

(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.

There from the dark abyss,
what being gloats on me?
I feel the chains
that hold me fettered fast to you.
Prometheus was not chained so fast
upon the cliffs of Caucasus
as I am chained to you.
Who are you, horrifying being?

(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.

Oh, now I recognize you.
It is myself.
So knowledge chains to you, pernicious
monster,

*(Maria Enters, but is not noticed
By Johannes for the time being)*

me, myself, pernicious monster.
I sought to flee from you.
The worlds wherein my folly fled,
in order to be free from my own self,

have dazzled and have blinded me.
And blind I am once more within the blinded
soul.

O man, know thou thyself!

*(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

Johannes *(as if coming to himself, sees Maria. The
meditation passes over into inner reality.)*
Maria, you are here!

Maria I've looked for you, my friend,
although I know
how dear to you is solitude,
now that so many people's views
have flooded through your soul.
And I know, too, that at this time
my presence cannot help my friend.
An urge that is obscure
is driving me to you this very moment
when words of Benedictus have called up,
instead of light, such bitter grief
out of your spirit depths.

Johannes How dear to me is solitude!
How often have I sought it out,
to find in it myself,
whenever pain and joy of men have driven
me
into the labyrinths of thought.
Maria, that is past.
What Benedictus' words at first
drew forth out of my soul,

and what I then lived through
from everything those people said,
seems little to me now
if I compare it to the storm
which solitude has brought
into my heavy brooding.
O this solitude!
It drove me into cosmic spaces;
it tore me from myself.
Within that being to whom I brought such
grief
I rose again but as another,
and had to bear the pain
which I myself had caused.
The fierce, dark solitude
then gave me back myself
but only to appall me
at the abyss of my own being.

For me, man's final refuge,
for me, my solitude is lost.

Maria

I must repeat my words to you:
no one but Benedictus can now help you.
The firm support we lack,
we both must have from him.
For know, I also can no longer bear
the riddle of my life,
unless some sign from him
can make the answer clear to me.
The lofty wisdom, pointing out
that only semblance and illusion
are spread out over all our life
as long as human thinking grasps alone its
surface,
I've often held it up before my mind.

And every time it says:
you must be clear that an illusion
is shrouding you, though often it may seem
the truth:
that evil fruit could come from your desire
to wake that light in others
which lives in you yourself.
My soul's best part can see
that heavy feelings of oppression
in you, my friend,
from living at my side
are too a portion of the thorny path
that leads you to the light of truth.
You must live through each terror
to which illusion can give birth
before the truth reveals itself to you:
thus speaks your star.
Yet through this starry word is also clear to
me
that we must wander on the spirit paths
together.
But when I seek these paths,
there spreads itself before my gaze dark
night.
And blacker still becomes this night
through much which I must meet
as fruit of my own being.
We both must look for clarity in that light,
which for the eye can vanish
but never be extinguished.

Johannes Maria, are you then aware
through what my soul has fought its way?
A heavy load indeed
has fallen upon you, dear friend.
Yet foreign to your being is that power

which has so wholly shattered me.
You can ascend to brightest heights of
truth;
you can direct your steady gaze
at men's confusion.
In light, in darkness,
you will affirm yourself.
But every moment can
deprive me of myself.
I had to plunge into those people
who through their words revealed
themselves just now.
I followed one into the cloister's loneliness,
I heard within the other's soul
Felicia's tales.
I was each one,
but for myself I died.
I'd have to have the faith
that beings spring from nothingness,
if I should cherish any hope
that from the nothingness in me
a human being ever could be born.
They force me out of fear into the darkness,
and hunt me through the darkness into fear,
these words imbued with wisdom:
O man, know thou thyself!

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

SCENE NINE

The same placed as in Scene Two

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

Johannes O man, unfold your being!
For three years now I've sought
for power of soul, with wings of courage,
to give these words their truth.
Through them a man who frees himself can
conquer,
and conquering himself, can find his
freedom.
O man, unfold your being!

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

This power of soul is rising from within
me
but only gently touching spirit hearing.
It harbours in itself the hope
that, growing, it will lead the human spirit
from narrowness far out to distant worlds,
just as the tiny acorn
mysteriously can expand
into the giant body of the noble oak.
The spirit in itself can bring to life
what weaves in air and water,
what has condensed to earth beneath.
For man can grasp
what has been taking hold of life
within the elements, in souls and spirits,
in time and in eternity.
The whole world-being lives within my soul,

when in the spirit there has taken root
the power that gives these words their truth:
O man, unfold your being!

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

I feel them sounding in my soul,
rousing themselves to give me strength.
There lives in me the light,
there speaks around me brightness,
there germinates in me the light of soul,
there works in me world-radiance.
O man, unfold your being!

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

*I find myself secure on every side,
wherever these words' power follows me.
It will illuminate for me the senses'
darkness
and will uphold me in the spirit heights.
It will enfill me with soul-substance
throughout all course of time.
The essence of the world I feel in me
and I must find myself in every world.
I see the being of my soul enlivened
through power that is my own.
I rest within myself.
I gaze on rocks and springs;
they speak the very language of my soul.
I find myself again within that being
to whom I brought such bitter grief,*

*and out of her I call out to myself:
'Oh, you must find me once again
and ease my suffering.'
The spirit's light will give me strength
to live the other self within myself.
O words of hope,
you stream forth power to me from all the
worlds:
O man, unfold your being.*

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

*You let me feel my weakness
and place me close to lofty aims of gods,
and blissfully I feel
such lofty aims' creative might
within my frail earth form.
Out of myself shall be revealed the purpose
for which the seed lies hidden in me.
And to the world I'll give myself
by living out my very being.
I want to feel these words' full power,
although they sound so gently.
They shall become for me a quickening fire
in my soul forces
and on my spirit paths.
I feel now how my thinking penetrates
deep hidden grounds of worlds
and how its radiant light illumines them.
Such is the germinating power of these
words:
O man, unfold your being.*

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)

O man, know thou thyself.

*From light-filled heights a Being shines
on me,
and wings I feel
that lift me up to him.
I too will free myself, as every being does
who overcomes himself.*

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

*I see that Being.
I shall become like him in future times.
The spirit will then free itself in me
through you, exalted goal of man.
I will now follow you.*

(Maria enters)

*My eye of soul has been awakened
by spirit beings who have welcomed me.
And as I gaze into the worlds of spirit,
I feel within myself that power:
O man, unfold your being.*

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

Maria, you are here?
>

*Maria My soul has led me here.
I could behold your star:
it shines in its full power.*

Johannes I can unfold that power from within me.

*Maria So closely are we linked
that your soul's life
lets its light shine into my soul.*

*Johannes Maria, you are then aware
of what has just revealed itself?
For me, man's core of confidence,
for me, the certainty of being has been
won.
I feel indeed the power of the words
which everywhere can guide me:
O man, unfold your being!*

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

In these scenes two levels of development, two steps in the unfolding of our souls, are shown.

Now please do not find it strange when I say that I do not mind interpreting this Rosicrucian Mystery just as I have interpreted other pieces of literature in our group. What I have often said about other poetry can also be brought before our

souls in a lively, spontaneous way by this drama. In fact, I have never failed to point out that a flower knows little, indeed, of what someone who is looking at it will find in it; yet, whatever he finds *is* contained in it. And in speaking about *Faust*, I explained that the poet did not necessarily know or feel everything in the words he was writing down that later would be discovered in them. I can assure you that nothing of what afterward I could say about the Rosicrucian Mystery, and that I know now is in it, was in my conscious mind as I wrote down the various scenes. The scene-pictures grew one by one, just like the leaves of a plant. One cannot bring forth a character by first having an idea and then turning this into a concrete figure. It was continually interesting to me how each scene grew out of the others preceding it. Friends who knew the earlier parts said that it was remarkable how everything came about quite differently from what one could have imagined.

This Mystery Drama exists now as a picture of human evolution in the development of a single person. I want to emphasize that true feeling makes it impossible to throw a cloak of abstractions around oneself in order to present anthroposophy; every human soul is different from every other and, at its core, must be different, because each one undergoes the experience of his own development. For this reason, instruction to the many can provide only general directions. One can give the complete truth only by applying it

to a single human soul, to a soul that reveals its human individuality in all its uniqueness. If, therefore, anyone should consider the figure of Johannes Thomasius in such a way as to transfer the specific description of that figure to general theories of human development, it would be absolutely incorrect. If he believed that he would experience exactly what Johannes Thomasius experienced, he would be quite mistaken. For while in the widest sense what Johannes Thomasius had to undergo is valid for everyone, in order to have the same specific experiences one would have to *be* Johannes Thomasius. Each person is a “Johannes Thomasius” in his own fashion.

Everything in the drama is presented, therefore, in a completely individual way. Through this, the truth portrayed by the particular figures brings out as clearly as possible the development of the soul of a human being. At the beginning, Thomasius is shown in the physical world, but certain soul-happenings are hinted at that provide a wide basis for such development, particularly an experience at a somewhat earlier time when he deserted a girl who had been lovingly devoted to him. Such things do take place, but this individual happening has a different effect on a man who has resolved to undertake his own development. There is one deep truth necessary for him who wants to undergo development: self-knowledge cannot be achieved by brooding within oneself but only through diving into the being of others. Through self-

knowledge we must learn that we have emerged from the cosmos. Only when we give ourselves up can we change into another Self. First of all, we are transformed into whatever was close to us in life.

When at first Johannes sinks more deeply into himself and then plunges in self-knowledge into another person, into the one to whom he has brought bitter pain, we see this as an example of the experience of oneself within another, a descent into self-knowledge. Theoretically, one can say that if we wish to know the blossom, we must plunge into the blossom, and the best method of acquiring self-knowledge is to plunge again, but in a different way, into happenings we once took part in. As long as we remain in ourselves, we experience only superficially whatever takes place. In contrast to true self-knowledge, what we think of other persons is then mere abstraction.

For Thomasius at first, what other people have lived through becomes a part of him. One of them, Capesius, describes some of his experiences; we can observe that they are rooted in real life. But Thomasius takes in more. He is listening. His listening is singular; later, in Scene

Eight, we will be able to characterize it. It is really as if Thomasius' ordinary Self were not present. Another deeper force appears, as though Thomasius were creeping into the

soul of Capesius and were taking part in what is happening from there. That is why it is so absolutely important for Thomasius to be estranged from himself. Tearing the Self out of oneself and entering into another is part and parcel of self-knowledge. It is noteworthy, therefore, that what he has listened to in Scene One, Thomasius says, reveals:

*... A mirrored image of the whole of life,
that showed me clearly to myself.
What is revealed to us out of the spirit
has led me to perceive how many men,
who think themselves a whole, in fact
hear in themselves one single facet only.
In order to unite within myself
all these divergent sides,
I started boldly on the path taught here —
and it has made of me a nothing.*

Why has it made a “nothing” of him? Because through self-knowledge he has plunged into these other persons. Brooding in your own inner self makes you proud, conceited. True self-knowledge leads, first of all, by having to plunge into a strange Self, into suffering. In Scene One Johannes follows each person so strongly that when he listens to Capesius he becomes aware of the words of Felicia within the other soul. He follows Strader into the loneliness of the cloister, but at first this has the character of something theoretical. He cannot

reach as far as he is later led, in Scene Two, through pain. Self-knowledge is deepened by the meditation within his inner Self. What was shown in Scene One is shown changed in Scene Two through self-knowledge intensified from abstraction to a concrete imagination. Those well-known words, which we have heard through the centuries as the motif of the Delphic Oracle, bring about a new life for this man Johannes, though at first it is a life of estrangement from himself.

Johannes enters, as a knower-of-himself, into all the outer phenomena. He finds his life in the air and water, in the rocks and springs, but not in himself. All the words that we can let sound on stage only from outside are actually the words of his meditation. As soon as the curtain rises, we have to confront these words, which would sound louder to anyone through self-knowledge than we can dare to produce on the stage. Thereafter, he who is learning to know himself dives into the other beings and elements and thus learns to know them. Then in a terrible form the same experience he has had earlier appears to him.

It is a deep truth that self-knowledge, when it progresses in the way we have characterized, leads us to see ourselves quite differently from the way we ever saw ourselves before. It teaches us to perceive our "I" as a strange being.

Man believes his own outer physical sheath to be the closest thing to himself. Nowadays, when he cuts a finger, he is much more connected with the painful finger than when, for instance, a friend hurts him with an unjust opinion. How much more does it hurt a modern person to cut his finger than to hear an unjust opinion! Yet he is only cutting into his bodily sheath. To feel our body as a tool, however, will come about only through self- knowledge.

Whenever a person grasps an object, he can feel his hand to some degree as a tool. This, too, he can learn to feel with one or another part of his brain. The inward feeling of his brain as instrument comes about at a certain level of self-knowledge. Specific places within the brain are localized. If we hammer a nail, we know we are doing it with a tool. We know that we are also using as tool one or another part of the brain. Through the fact that these things are objective and can become separate and strange to us, we come to know our brain as something quite separate from us. Self-knowledge requires this sort of objectivity as regards our body; gradually our outer sheath becomes as objective to us as the ordinary tools we use. Then, as soon as we have made a start at feeling our bodily sheath as separate object, we truly begin to live in the outside world.

Because a person feels only his body, he is not clear about the boundary between the air outside and the air in his lungs.

All the same, he will say that it is the same air, outside and inside. So it is with everything, with the blood, with everything that belongs to the body. But what belongs to the body cannot be outside and inside — that is mere illusion. It is only through the fact that we allow the internal bodily nature to become outward that in truth it finds a further life out in the rest of the world and the cosmos.

In the first scene recited today there was an effort to express the pain of feeling estranged from oneself — the pain of feeling estranged because of being outside and within all the other things. Johannes Thomasius' own bodily sheath seems like a person outside himself. But just because of that — that he feels his own body outside — he can see the approach of another body, that of the young girl he once deserted. It comes toward him; he has learned how to speak with the very words of the other being. She says to him, whose Self has widened out to her:

*He brought me bitter sorrow;
I gave him all my trust.
He left me in my grief alone.
He robbed me of the warmth of life
and thrust me deep into cold earth.*

Then guilt, very much alive, rises up in the soul when, plunging our own Self into another and attaching ourselves to

the pain of this other being, the pain is spoken out. This is a deepening, an intensifying. Johannes is truly *within* the pain, because he has caused it. He feels himself dissolving into it and then waking up again. What is he actually experiencing?

When we try to put all this together, we will find that the ordinary, normal human being undergoes something similar only in the condition we call kamaloka. The initiate, however, has to experience in this world what the normal person experiences in the spiritual world. Within the physical body he must go through what ordinarily is experienced outside the physical body. All the elements of kamaloka have to be undergone as the elements of initiation. Just as Johannes dives into the soul to whom he has brought such grief, so must the normal human being in kamaloka dive into the souls to which he has brought pain. It is just as if a slap in the face has to come back to him; he has to feel the same pain. The only difference is that the initiate experiences this in the physical body, and other people after death. The one who goes through this here will afterward live otherwise in kamaloka. But even all that one undergoes in kamaloka can be so experienced that one does not become entirely free. It is a most difficult task to become completely free. A man feels as if he were chained to his physical conditions.

In our time one of the most important elements for our development — not yet so much in the Greco-Roman epoch

but especially important nowadays — is that the human being must experience how infinitely difficult it is to become free of himself. Therefore, a notable initiation experience is described by Johannes as feeling chained to his own lower nature; his own being seems to be a creature to which he is firmly fettered:

*I feel the chains
that hold me fettered fast to you.
Prometheus was not chained so fast
upon the cliffs of Caucasus
as I am chained to you.*

This belongs to self-knowledge; it is a secret of self-knowledge. We should try to understand it correctly.

A question about this secret could be phrased like this: have we in some way become better human beings by becoming earth dwellers, by entering into our physical sheaths, or would we be better by remaining in our inner natures and throwing off those sheaths? Superficial people, taking a look at life in the spirit, may well ask: why ever do we have to plunge down into a physical body? It would be much easier to stay up there and not get into the whole miserable business of earthly existence.

For what reason have the wise powers of destiny thrust us down here? Perhaps it helps our feelings a little to say that for

millions and millions of years the divine, spiritual powers have worked on the physical body. Because of this, we should make more out of ourselves than we have the strength to do. Our inner forces are not enough. We cannot yet be what the gods have intended for us if we wish to be only what is in our inner nature, if our outer sheaths do not work some corrections in us. Life shows us that here on earth man is put into his physical sheaths and that these have been prepared for him by the beings of three world epochs. Man has now to develop his inner nature. Between birth and death, he is bad; in Devachan he is a better creature, taken up by divine, spiritual beings who shower him with their own forces. Later on, in the Vulcan epoch, he will be a perfect being. Now on the earth he is a being who gives way to this or that desire. Our hearts, for one thing, are created with such wisdom that they can hold out for decades against the excesses we indulge in, such as drinking coffee. What man can be today through his own will is the way he travels through kamaloka. There he has to learn what he can be through his own will, and that is certainly nothing very good. Whenever man is asked to describe himself, he cannot use the adjective “beautiful.” He has to describe himself as Johannes does in Scene Two:

Yet how do I behold myself!
My human form is lost;
as raging dragon I must see myself,

begot of lust and greed.

I clearly sense

how an illusion's cloud

has hid from me till now

my own appalling form.

Our inner nature stretches flexibly within our bodily sheaths and is hidden from us. When we approach initiation, we learn really to see ourselves as a kind of raging dragon. Therefore, these words are drawn up out of the deepest perception; they are words of self-knowledge, not of self-brooding:

It is myself.

*So knowledge chains to you, pernicious monster,
me myself, pernicious monster.*

At bottom, they are both the same, one the subject, the other the object.

I sought to flee from you.

This flight, however, merely leads the human being directly to himself.

But then the crowd turns up, the crowd we find ourselves in when we really look into ourselves. We find ourselves to be a collection of lusts and passions we had not noticed earlier, because each time we wanted to look into ourselves our eyes

were distracted to the world outside. Indeed, compared to what we would have seen inside, the world outside is wonderfully beautiful. Out there, in the illusion, in the maya of life, we stop looking at ourselves inwardly. When people around us, however, begin to talk all kinds of stupidity and we cannot stand it, we escape to where we can be alone. This is quite important at some levels of development. We can and should collect ourselves; it is a good means of self-knowledge. But it can happen that, coming into a crowd of people, we can no longer be alone; those others appear, either within us or outside us, no matter; they do not allow us to be alone. Then comes the experience we must have: solitude actually brings forth the worst kind of fellowship.

*For me, man's final refuge,
for me, my solitude is lost.*

Those are genuine experiences. Do not let the strength, the intensity, of the happenings trouble you. You do not have to believe that such strength and intensity as described must necessarily lead to anxiety or fear. It should not prevent anyone from also plunging into these waters. No one will experience all this as swiftly or with such vehemence as Johannes does; it had to come about for him in this way for a definite purpose, even prematurely, too. A normal self-development proceeds differently. Therefore, what occurs in Johannes so tumultuously must be understood as an

individual happening. Because he is this particular individual, who has suffered a kind of shipwreck, everything he undergoes takes place much more tempestuously than it otherwise would. He is confronted by the laws of self-development in such a way that they throw him completely off balance. As for us, one thing should be awakened by this description of Johannes, that is, the perception that true self-knowledge has nothing to do with trite phrases, that true self-knowledge inevitably leads us into pain and sorrow.

Things that once were a source of delight can assume a different face when they appear in the realm of self-knowledge. We can long for solitude, no doubt, when we have already found self-knowledge. But in certain moments of self-development it is solitude we have lost when we look for it as we did earlier, in moments when we flow out into the objective world, when in loneliness we have to suffer the sharpest pain.

Learning to perceive in the right way this outpouring of the Self into other beings will help us feel what has been put into the Mystery Drama: a certain artistic element has been created in which everything is spiritually realistic. One who thinks realistically — a genuine, artistic, sensitive realist — undergoes at unrealistic performances a certain amount of suffering. Even what at a certain level can provide great satisfaction is at another level a source of pain. This is due to the path of self-development. A play by Shakespeare, for

instance, an immense achievement in the physical world, can be an occasion for artistic pleasure. But a certain moment of development can arrive when we are no longer satisfied by Shakespeare because we seem inwardly torn to pieces. We go from one scene to the next but no longer see the necessity that has ordered one scene to follow another. We begin to find it unnatural that a scene follows the one preceding it. Why unnatural? Because nothing holds two scenes together except the dramatist Shakespeare and his audience. His scenes follow the abstract principle of cause and effect but not a concrete reality. It is characteristic of Shakespeare's drama that nothing of underlying karma is hinted at; this would tie the scenes together more closely.

The Rosicrucian drama grew into a realistic, spiritually realistic one. It makes huge demands on Johannes Thomasius, who is constantly on stage without taking part actively or showing a single important dramatic characteristic. He is the one in whose soul everything takes place, and what is described is the development of that soul, the real experience of the soul's development.

Johannes' soul spins one scene realistically out of the one before it. Through this we see that *realistic* and *spiritual* do not contradict each other. *Materialistic* and *spiritual* things do not need each other, and they can contradict each other. But *realistic* and *spiritual* are not opposites; it is quite possible for

spiritual realism to be admired even by a materialistic person. In regard to artistic principles, the plays of Shakespeare can be thought of as realistic. You will understand, however, how far the art that goes hand in hand with a science of the spirit must finally lead. For the one who finds his Self out in the cosmos, the whole cosmos becomes an ego being. We cannot bear then anything coming toward us that is *not* related to the ego being. Art will gradually learn something in this direction; it will come to the ego principle, because the Christ has brought us our ego for the first time. In the most various realms will this ego be alive.

In still another way can the specific human entity be shown within the soul and also divided into its various components outside. If someone asked which person represents Atma, which one Buddhi, which one Manas? ... if someone in the audience could exclaim, "O yes, that figure on the stage is the personification of Manas!" ... it would be a horrible kind of art, a dreadful kind of art. It is a bad theosophical habit to try to explain everything like this. One would like to say, "Poor thing!" of a work of art that has to be "explained." If it were to be attempted with Shakespeare's plays, it would indeed be absurd and downright wrong.

These habits are the childhood diseases of the theosophical movement. They will gradually be cured. But for once at least, it is necessary to point them out. It might even

happen that someone tries to look for the nine members of the human organization in the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven!

On the other hand, it is correct to some extent to say that the united elements of human nature can be assigned to different characters. One person has this soul coloring, a second person another; we can see characters on the stage who present different sides of the whole unified human being. The people we encounter in the world usually present one or another particular trait. As we develop from incarnation to incarnation, we gradually become a whole. To show this underlying fact on the stage, our whole life has somehow to be separated into parts.

In this Rosicrucian Mystery, we will find that everything that Maria is supposed to be is dispersed among the other figures who are around her as companions. They form with her what might be called an “egoity.” We find special characteristics of the sentient soul in Philia, of the intellectual soul in Astrid, of the consciousness soul in Luna. It was for this reason that their names were chosen. The names of all the characters and beings were given according to their natures. In Devachan, Scene Seven, particularly, where everything is spirit, not only the words but also the placing of the words is meant to characterize the three figures of Philia, Astrid, and Luna in their exact relationships. The speeches at the beginning of Scene Seven are a better description of sentient

soul, intellectual soul, and consciousness soul than any number of words otherwise could achieve. Here one can really demonstrate what each soul is. One can show in an artistic form the relationship of the three souls by means of the levels at which the figures stand. In the human being they flow into one another. Separated from each other, they show themselves clearly: Philia as she places herself in the cosmos; Astrid as she relates herself to the elements; Luna as she directs herself into free deed and self-knowledge. Because they show themselves so clearly in the Devachan scene, everything in it is alchemy in the purest sense of the word; all of alchemy is there, if one can gradually discover it.

Not only as abstract content is alchemy in the scene but in the weaving essence of the words. Therefore, you should listen not merely to what is said, nor indeed only to what each single character speaks, but particularly to how the soul forces speak in relation to one another. The sentient soul pushes itself into the astral body; we can perceive weaving astrality there. The intellectual soul slips itself into the etheric body; there we perceive weaving ether being. We can observe how the consciousness soul pours itself with inner firmness into the physical body. Soul endeavor that has an effect like light is contained in Philia's words. In Astrid is contained what brings about the etheric-objective ability to confront the very truth of things. Inner resolve connected at first with the firmness of the physical body is given in Luna.

We must begin to be sensitive to all this. Let us listen to the soul forces in Scene Seven:

Philia
(*Sentient soul*)

I will imbue myself
with clearest essence of the light
from worldwide spaces.
I will breathe in sound-substance,
life-bestowing,
from far ethereal regions,
that you, beloved sister, with your
work
may reach your goal.

Astrid
(*Intellectual soul*)

And I will weave
into the radiant light
the clouding darkness.
I will condense
the life of sound,
that glistening it may ring
and ringing it may glisten,
that you, beloved sister,
may guide the rays of soul.

Luna
(*Consciousness
soul*)

I will enwarm soul-substance
and will make firm life-ether.
They shall condense themselves,
they shall perceive themselves,
and in themselves residing
guard their creative forces,
that you, beloved sister,
within the seeking soul
may quicken certainty of
knowledge.

I would like to draw your attention to the words of Philia,

*Dass dir, geliebte Schwester,
Das Werk gelingen kann.
(that you, beloved sister, with your work may reach your goal.)*

and to those of Astrid that carry the connotation of something heavier, more compact,

Dass du, geliebte Schwester ...

“*Dass dir*,” “*Dass du*,” and then we have the “*Du*” again in Luna’s speech woven together with the still heavier, weighty

*Der suchenden Menschenseele
(within the seeking soul)*

There the “u” is woven into its neighboring consonants, so that it can take on a still firmer compactness. [In the English translation of *The Portal of Initiation* these three sound distinctions could not be kept, except in the word “soul” at the end of Luna’s speech, in which *the (spoken) diphthong* possesses a nuance of “u.”]

These are the things that one can actually characterize. Please remember, it all depends on the “How.” Let us compare the words Philia speaks next:

*I will entreat the spirits of the worlds
that they, with light of being,
enchant soul feeling,
that they, with tone of words,
charm spirit hearing,*

with the rather different ones of Astrid:

*I will guide streams of love
that fill the world with warmth,
into the heart
of him, the consecrated one.*

Just here, where these words are spoken, the inner weaving essence of the world of Devachan has been achieved.

I am mentioning all this, because the scenes should make it clear that when self-knowledge begins to unfold into the outer cosmic weaving and being, we have to give up everything that is one-sided. We have to learn, too, to be aware — as we otherwise do only in a quite superficial, pedestrian way — of what is at hand at every point of existence. We become inflexible creatures, we human beings, when we stay rooted to only *one* spot in space, believing that our words can express the truth. But words, limited as they are to physical sound, are not what best will communicate truth. I would like

to put it like this: we have to become sensitive to the voice itself. Anything as important as Johannes Thomasius' path to self-knowledge can be rightfully experienced — it depends on this — only when he struggles courageously for that self-knowledge and holds on to it.

When self-knowledge has crushed us, the next stage is to begin to draw into ourselves, to harbor inwardly what was our outer experience, learning how closely the cosmos is related to ourselves (for this comes to us after we understand the nature of the beings around us); now we must attempt courageously to live with our understanding. It is only one half of the matter to dive down like Johannes into a being to whom we have brought sorrow and have thrust into cold earth. For now, we have begun to feel differently. We summon up our courage to make amends for the pain we have caused. Now we can dive into this new life and speak out of our own nature differently. This is what confronts us in Scene Nine. In Scene Two the young girl cried out to Johannes:

*He brought me bitter sorrow;
I gave him all my trust.
He left me in my grief alone.
He robbed me of the warmth of life
and thrust me deep into cold earth.*

In Scene Nine, however, after Johannes has undergone

what every path to self-knowledge demands, the same being calls to him:

*O you must find me once again
and ease my suffering.*

This is the other side of the coin: first the devastation and despair, and now the return to equilibrium. The being calls to him:

O you must find me once again ...

It could not have been described otherwise, this lifting into perception of the world, this replenishing of himself with life experience. True self-knowledge through perception of the cosmos could only have been described with the words Johannes uses when he comes to himself. It has begun, of course, in Scene Two:

*For many years these words
of weighty meaning I have heard.*

Then — after he has dived down into deep earth, after he has united himself with it — the power is born in his soul to let the words arise that express the essence of Scene Nine:

*For three years now I've sought
for power of soul, with wings of courage,*

to give these words their truth.

*Through them a man who frees himself can conquer
and, conquering himself, can find his freedom.*

The words, “O man, unfold your being!” are in direct contrast to the words of Scene Two, “O man, know thou thyself!” There appears to us once and again the very same scene. It leads the first time downward to:

*The world and my own nature
are living in the words:
O man, know thou thyself!*

Then afterward it is the opposite; it has changed. The scene characterizes soul development.

You have also heard the devastating words:

*Maria, are you then aware
through what my soul has fought its way?*

*For me, man’s final refuge,
for me, my solitude is lost.*

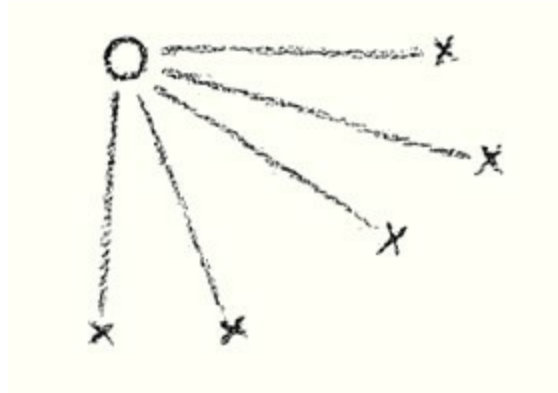
But Scene Nine shows how the being of the girl attains first hope and then security. That is the turning point. It cannot be constructed haphazardly; it is actual experience. Through it we can sense how self-knowledge in a soul like Johannes

Thomasius can ascend into a self- unfolding. We should perceive, too, how his experience is distributed among many single persons in whom one characteristic has been formed in each incarnation.

At the end of the drama a whole community stands there in the Sun Temple, like a tableau, and the many together are a single person. The various characteristics of a human being are distributed among them all; essentially there is one person there. A pedant might like to object. "Are there not too many different members of the whole? Surely nine or twelve would be the correct number!" But reality does not always work in such a way as to be in complete agreement with theory. This way it corresponds more nearly with the truth than if we had all the single constituents of man's being marching up in military rank and file.

Let us now put ourselves into the Sun Temple. There are various persons standing in the places they belong to karmically, just as their karmas have brought them together in life. But when we think of Johannes here in the middle and think, too, that all the other characters are mirrored in his soul, each character as one of his soul qualities — what is happening there if we can accept it as reality?

Johannes Thomasius



Karma has actually brought these persons together as in a focal point. Nothing is without intention, plan, or reason; what the single individualities have done not only has meaning for each one himself, but each is also a soul experience for Johannes Thomasius. Everything is happening twice: once in the macrocosm, a second time in the microcosm, in the soul of Johannes. This is his initiation. Just as Maria, for example, has a special connection with him, so, too, there is an important part of his soul with a similar connection to another part of his soul. Those are absolute correspondences, embodied in the drama uncompromisingly. What one sees as outer stage- happening is, in Johannes, an inner happening in his development. There has to come about what the Hierophant has described in Scene Three:

*There forms itself within this circle
a knot out of the threads
which karma spins in world becoming.*

It has already formed itself, and this truly entangled knot

shows what everything is leading toward. There is absolute reality as to how karma spins its threads; it is not an aimless spinning. We experience the knot as the initiation event in Johannes' soul, and the whole scene shows us a certain individuality actually standing above the others, that is, the Hierophant, who is directing, who is guiding the threads. We need only think of the Hierophant's relationship to Maria.

But it is just there that we can realize how self- knowledge can illuminate what happens to Maria in Scene Three. It is not at all pleasant, this emerging out of the Self. It is a thoroughly real experience, a forsaking of the human sheaths by our inner power; the sheaths left behind become then a battleground for inferior powers. When Maria sends down a ray of love to the Hierophant, it can only be portrayed in this way: down below, the physical body, taken over by the power of the adversary, speaks out the antithesis of what is happening above. From above a ray of love streams down, and below arises a curse. Those are the contrasting scenes: Scene Seven in

Devachan, where Maria describes what she has actually brought about, and Scene Three, where, from the deserted body, the curses of the demonic forces are directed toward the Hierophant. Those are the two corresponding scenes. They complete each other. If they had had to be "constructed" theoretically from the beginning, the end result would have

been incredibly poor.

I therefore have based today's lecture on one aspect of this Mystery Drama, and I should like to extend this to include certain special characteristics that underlie initiation.

Although it has been necessary to bring out rather sharply what has just been shown as the actual events of initiation, it should not let you lose courage or resolve in your own striving toward the spiritual world. The description of dangers was aimed at strengthening a person against powerful forces. The dangers are there; pain and sorrow are the prospect. It would be a poor sort of effort if we proposed to rise into higher worlds in the most convenient way. Striving to reach the spiritual worlds cannot yet be as convenient as rolling over the miles in a modern train, one of those many conveniences our materialistic culture has put into our everyday lives. What has been described should not make us timid; to a certain extent the very encounter with the dangers of initiation should steel our courage.

Johannes Thomasius' disposition made him unable to continue painting; this grew into pain, and the pain grew into perception. So, it is that everything that arouses pain and sorrow will transform itself into perception. But we have to search earnestly for this path, and our search will be possible only when we realize that the truths of spiritual science are

not at all simple. They are such profound truths for our whole life that no one will ever understand them perfectly. It is just the single example in actual life that helps us to understand the world. One can speak about the conditions of a spiritual development much more exactly when one describes the development of Johannes, rather than when one describes the development of human beings in general. In the book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, [Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, Anthroposophic Press, Inc., Spring Valley, NY, reprinted 1983.] the development that every human being can undertake is described, simply the concrete possibility as such. When we portray Johannes Thomasius, we look at a single individuality. But therewith we lose the opportunity of describing such development in a general way.

I hope you will be induced to say that I have not yet spoken out the essential truth of the matter. For we have described two extremes and must find the various gradations between them. I can give only a few suggestive ideas, which should then begin to live in your hearts and souls.

When I gave you some indications about the Gospel of St. Matthew, [Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. Matthew*, Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1965.] I asked you not to try to remember the very words but to try — when you go out into life — to look into your heart and soul to discover what the

words have *become*. Read not only the printed lectures, but read also in a truly earnest way your own soul.

For this to happen, however, something must have been given from outside, something has first to enter into us; otherwise, there could be self-deception of the soul. If you can begin to read in your soul, you will notice that what comes to you from outside re-echoes quite differently within. A true anthroposophical effort would be first of all to understand what is said in as many different ways as there are listeners.

No one speaking about spiritual science could wish to be understood in only one sense. He would like to be understood in as many ways as there are souls present to understand him. Anthroposophy can tolerate this. One thing is needed, however, and this is not an incidental remark; one thing is needed: every single kind of understanding should be correct and true. Each one may be individual, but it must be true. Sometimes it seems that the uniqueness of the interpretation lies in being just the opposite of what has been said.

When then we speak of self-knowledge, we should realize how much more useful it is to come to it by looking for mistakes within ourselves and for the truth outside.

It shall not be said, "Search within yourself for the truth!" Indeed, truth is to be found outside ourselves. We will find it poured out over the world. Through self-knowledge we must

become free of ourselves and undergo those various gradations of soul experience. Loneliness can become a horrid companion.

We can also perceive our terrible weakness when we sense with our feelings the greatness of the cosmos out of which we have been born. But then through this we take courage. And we can make ourselves courageous enough to experience what we perceive.

Then we will finally discover that, after the loss of all the certainty we had in life, there will blossom for us the first and last certainty of life, the confidence that finding ourselves in the cosmos allows us to conquer and find ourselves anew.

*O man, experience the world within yourself!
For then — in striding forth beyond your self —
You will find yourself at last
Within you own true Self.*

Let us feel these words as genuine experience. They will gradually become for us steps in our development.

The Wisdom Contained in Ancient Documents and in the Gospels

If we look back upon the evolution of humanity, if we look back — let us say — as far as history permits it, we shall encounter something very strange. Various phenomena enable us to examine what we thus encounter. Above all, (and we shall see to-day that what we are about to say may be applied to every human heart, to every human soul) we may examine the evolution of humanity with the aid of various documents, traditions and writings which have been preserved. We shall find in them something very strange and peculiar. If we go back to the conceptions which were formed by the various peoples of ancient times in connection with the origin of the world and of the sources of what is good and moral, we shall find that the conceptions which thus arose are laid down in legends — in myths and legends. We come across such legends and myths in a more or less beautiful, lofty, sublime or even less significant form among the various peoples of the earth. A modern man is so very much inclined to consider these myths and legends as poems and to say: They were invented by the peoples during their infancy, because they did not as yet possess the sources of modern science. They have, for instance, formed all kinds of ideas about the origin of the world: the Greeks and their gods, the ancient Germanic peoples and their gods, and, if you like, the American peoples, whose legends have recently been discovered and which are found to correspond with what

exists among other peoples. If we learn that among the Central-American peoples Quetzalcoatl and Vitzliputzli play a role which is more primitive but similar to that of other mighty characters created by other races we shall see that such legends and myths exist among all these peoples ... And, as already stated, a modern man is easily inclined to say: These are poems, fantastic inventions of man's spirit, in order to explain the origin of the various beings of the world and of the various phenomena of Nature!

Among the various documents, there is one which I have already considered with a greater number of the friends who are now present. It is a lofty, mighty document: the *Genesis*, the beginning of the Old Testament. At Munich we have already seen how infinitely deep are the contents of the Genesis. [Secrets at the Bible Story of Creation.] Several of you have also heard the explanations supplied by spiritual knowledge in connection with the various Gospels, which are, as it were, the last documents of this kind. We find that such documents have been preserved and that they have arisen at various periods of time as we were passing through our preceding incarnations, periods of time through which we have passed during our preceding lives on earth. Those who advance in spiritual knowledge must learn to realize that they have lived during times when men spoke, for instance, of Zeus, Hera and Chronos, and so forth, when they spoke of the phenomena of Nature in a different way from the one

which is usual to-day, that they spoke of them in the form of myths, legends and fairy-tales. We must bear all this in mind. We must say to our selves: How do matters stand with our soul that has taken up these things (most people are not aware, so to speak, of what has been deposited within them) which now come to the fore again?

I shall now describe to you very simply what happens with a person who takes up within him these documents — to begin with, in the form of legends, myths and poems — and who then penetrates into occult science, into occultism, and who uses occult science as an instrument enabling him to understand them more and more. He will experience something very strange. I will take, for instance, just one case: What will take place within him in connection with the Old Testament?

In the case of the Old Testament, which most modern men read in such a way that they consider it as a very beautiful collection of all kinds of images about the world's origin, he will find that he will gradually say to himself: Infinite wisdom is contained in these things which are rendered in such a peculiar way! And he will gradually discover that the single words and sentences contain things — provided he understands them rightly — to which occult investigation can lead him along entirely independent paths. And his respect for these writings will grow. The most efficacious means perhaps

of increasing our appreciation of these documents is to penetrate to some extent into spiritual science.

A question may then arise and may be placed before our soul. The human being may then say: How do matters really stand as far as this question is concerned? The ancient documents have been preserved: if we penetrate into them we discover in them the deepest, most significant spiritual meaning. Even if today we cannot feel entirely convinced of the fact that these documents contain, indeed, an overwhelming wisdom, we should persevere in our search and penetrate into them more and more. We shall then see that the wisdom which they contain is indeed overwhelming. It is not we who bring anything into them ... it would be quite ridiculous to say that we bring anything into them. The documents themselves contain this wisdom. Indeed, the greatest discoveries which can be made in the, sphere of spiritual science, the loftiest things which can be found again with great effort through occult investigation — all this may afterwards be discovered, for instance, in just one word of the Bible in the Genesis. This is very strange, is it not so?

We find, however, that there is a certain difference between the Old Testament and all the other legends, myths and documents. This is a fact which we should bear in mind. For there is a difference. Consider, for instance, the legends of the Greeks, of the ancient Germans, even what is contained

in the Vedas of the Hindoos, or Persian documents. Take whatever you like — if you compare it with the Old Testament you will find a tremendous difference. This difference appears quite clearly to the unprejudiced investigation of an occultist the more he penetrates into these things. This difference appears in the following way: We shall gradually discover that all the other documents set forth in a legendary form the riddles of the phenomena of Nature, the riddles connected with all these phenomena of Nature, and also with the human being, in so far as he has a kind of natural form of life, in so far as the powers of Nature compel him to do this or the other thing. The Old Testament, however, is the one and only document in which we find the human being described from the very beginning as an ethical soul-being, not merely as a being of Nature. And everything in the Old Testament is described in such a way that the human being is placed within the course of evolution, as an ethical soul-being. Every other statement made by modern science rests upon a very weak foundation; it dissolves into nothing if we really observe things. This is the great difference which appears to us. We may therefore say: Everything else in the world shows us that men have obtained mighty revelations from one or the other direction, they have obtained mighty revelations which were expressed in the legendary form of myths and which have arisen out of deep wisdom. We may also say that as far as the Old Testament is concerned the human beings have had certain definite revelations which are connected with the

ethical soul-mysteries of man. This is a fact which is, in any case, quite clear.

Another difference appears, however, if we compare the New Testament with all the other documents of this kind. We find in it a spirit which differs entirely from the one contained in any other document, even in the Old Testament. How can we grasp this difference if we approach the question as anthroposophists? We shall realize this difference if we first place another phenomenon before our soul.

Let us imagine, first of all, a man who has never heard anything about spiritual science, who is entirely the product of a scientific or of another so-called sensible education of our modern time, and who has, therefore, never had the chance to permeate the ancient documents with spiritual science. We may perhaps imagine him as a learned person or as an unlearned person — the difference is not so great — we may imagine him in any case as a person who has had no contact with spiritual science and we see him approach these ancient documents, Greek, Persian, Indian, Germanic documents, and so forth. We imagine him approaching these documents, equipped with everything which modern thinking can give him, if he is really unable to feel even a breath of what constitutes spiritual investigation a very strange thing will appear. There will be a difference according to his more or less greater inclination toward poetry or toward a matter-of-fact mentality,

but on the whole we may say that something very strange will appear. Such a man will never be able to understand the ancient documents, he will never be able to penetrate into the way in which wisdom is offered by them, he is simply unable to do it, it is quite impossible for him to understand them. In this sphere, we come across the strangest examples; it may suffice to refer to one of the most recent attempts to explain these ancient documents. A little book has just appeared, which is extremely interesting because it is so absurd. It attempts to explain, as it were, all the myths up to the Gospels, beginning with the earliest documents of the most primitive peoples. It is really a book which is extraordinarily interesting because of its grotesque way, its grotesquely stupid way of grasping things. It is entitled "Orpheus," and its author is Salomon Reinach, who is well known in France as an investigator in this sphere, and among scientists he is a characteristic example of a man who has not even had the slightest inkling of the way in which it is possible to penetrate into such things. In this book, a definite method is applied to everything, and the author passes sentence upon everything. He sees nothing but symbols, and there are no real beings behind Hermes, Orpheus, etc. These characters are merely symbols and allegories to him ... It is not proper to repeat the explanations which he gives for these symbols; he speaks of them in such a way that it is not necessary to repeat them. Every reality contained in these things can thus be proved to be non-existent ... the reality of Demeter and of Persephone

is explained away, he decrees that they do not exist. According to this author, all these names are merely symbols. He follows a method according to which it would be easy to prove to children, eighty years hence, that a man named Salomon Reinach has never lived in France at all, at the beginning of the twentieth century, but that the civilization of that time has merely comprised the contents of this book in the name of Salomon Reinach. This could be proved quite well! In spite of all, these things have caused a great sensation. And according to this same method evidence has been produced in Germany to the effect that Jesus has never lived at all. This too has caused a great sensation.

You see, we may now ask: Why is it not possible to-day to penetrate into these things without the aid of spiritual science, (and it is a fact that it is not possible to do this without spiritual science) what is the true reason for this? If we wish to understand the true reason for this, we must gain a deeper insight into the evolution of humanity. We must look back a certain while into this evolution of humanity. And as a result we shall really feel compelled to say: Indeed, the science which men possess to-day, the science which is taught to-day in the elementary schools concerning the sun, and so forth, this is something which the ancients did not possess they did not possess a science which could be grasped with the understanding, with the intellect. This is something to which the human race has advanced little by little. And when our

souls were born during earlier incarnations, they were certainly not able to take up this form of science, for this did not exist, this was not as yet incorporated in our civilization. But the more we go back into the course of evolution, the more we shall find (quite apart from the fact of seeking the reasons for this which have often been explained to many of you here, in this or in that direction) that men possessed a deep wisdom of an entirely different kind from the one of to-day, wisdom concerning spiritual things which modern men are unable to express in their scientific form. This wisdom ruled in the souls of men, it lived in their souls. Wisdom was simply there. Particularly the initiated leaders of humanity possessed this wisdom, and if the anthroposophical spirit lives within us, it can be proved historically that a primal revelation, a primal wisdom was spread over the whole human race upon the earth, a wisdom which took on this or that form, according to the various stages of evolution. If anyone considers history with a truly anthroposophical spirit he will discover this primal, original revelation. But something else is needed: the ordinary, modern scientific mentality must pass through a preparation if it wishes to penetrate into these documents and grasp their true meaning — I shall now relate a simple fact — a preparation is needed enabling a modern man to penetrate into the spirit of these writings. If he passes through this preparation he will be able to penetrate into the spirit of these writings. This preparation consists in the study of the only documents which can be studied to-day in a direct and

immediate way, namely, the *Gospels* and the *Epistles of St. Paul*. If we are filled with an anthroposophical spirit it is possible to approach these documents in a direct and immediate way and to understand them.

Even if we know nothing whatever about Anthroposophy, but if our feelings are filled with an anthroposophical spirit (this can be the case with many people) we may feel that something special lives in the Gospels and in the Epistles of St. Paul. This is indeed a strange fact! And in the case of an occultist another strange thing arises, something quite special will arise in his case. Namely, in the case of an occultist we may find that in accordance with modern prejudices he has, let us say, a certain aversion to approach these Gospels. It is quite possible to be filled with an occultistic spirit and yet to feel an aversion to the Gospels, to say, that they are only one religion among many others. No attempt is made to approach the Gospels, and it is possible to understand this aversion. But if we do this as occultists, if we have this strange attitude as occultists, we shall find that we cannot grasp what is contained in other documents. Everywhere we shall find something which we cannot understand. We may be content with this, but if we continue to penetrate more and more deeply into these things we shall never reach a goal unless we have passed through a preparation by studying the Gospels. On the other hand, it is a fact that if someone who may even be a well-trained occultist approaches an oriental or

an occidental document and comes across a very hard nut which he cannot crack ... he will immediately be enlightened about the things contained in other documents if he approaches — even if it is only in spirit — the events of Palestine and if he allows them to inspire him. This is an undeniable fact. A ray of light can go out of the Gospels, and this is an experience which can be made. We must admit that the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul are indeed necessary if we wish to go back into earlier times. It is not possible to ignore them, to take no notice of them. Particularly the occultist will always realize this. If he is really able to read the spiritual documents, the Akasha Chronicle, it will not be necessary for him to consult the written Gospels — but he must approach the events of Palestine, he cannot ignore them. Otherwise, certain preceding things will always remain dark. I am therefore not drawing your attention to the records, or to the written word, but to the events, in the form in which they have really taken place within the course of human evolution. This is a very important fact.

I wish to throw some light upon this fact also from another side. Let us bear in mind what I have already stated. It is not possible to ignore, as it were, the event of the Christ, and if we wish to understand what has been given to humanity in the form of a primordial revelation we shall always trip up somewhere. I must say the following if I wish to describe the true aspect of things. Let us suppose that a modern occultist

investigates the past and that he has no understanding (for it is this understanding which is so important) for the event of the Christ. He disregards the event of the Christ and proceeds to investigate earlier events of human evolution. He will then find that he grows uncertain everywhere, really everywhere. Of course, he can persuade himself that he feels quite certain about these things, but if he is honest he will have to admit that things are not entirely as they should be. Let us now imagine an occult investigator before the time of Christ Jesus, an occult investigator who has reached such a high degree of development in clairvoyance and also in other directions that he is able, even before the Christian era, to survey the whole past in such a way that, had he lived after the event of the Christ, he would have passed through the Christ event in his retrospective survey, a man who is therefore in advance of his time. Let us suppose that he lived five or six centuries before Christ and that he reached the maturity of a modern occultist; that is to say he is able to go back into the earlier events of human evolution by passing through the Christ event. And we may then ask ourselves: How would an occultist who is so much in advance of his time, that even five or six centuries before Christ he can go back into the earlier events of human evolution by passing through the Christ event, how would such an occultist have to appear in order to avoid falling a prey to the luciferic and ahrimanic powers? Let us suppose that it would really be necessary for him to pass through the Christ event ... This Christ event, however, has not yet taken

place at the time in which he lived. In the case of such a man it appears that he will easily content himself with what he discovers — and he will then speak of all kinds of things which are not quite correct, for it is not possible to speak correctly about things if they are not seen correctly — but otherwise nothing will happen to him. Or else he will reach the point of saying: “There is something amiss, something I cannot find when I turn my gaze backwards. I cannot discover this something which I need along my path.” And he will then have to admit to himself: “Here I begin to grow uncertain. I must find this missing ‘something,’ but it does not exist as yet upon the earth. It cannot as yet be found within the evolution of the earth.”

You see, I have now painted theoretically, as it were, the portrait of a personality who lived during the 5th and 6th century before Christ, a personality who would have been mature enough to discover Christ Jesus in a retrospective survey, but he could not discover him because Christ Jesus had not as yet appeared upon the earth. He could not discover Christ Jesus as an earthly fact. A short time ago this theory took on the form of a vivid reality. I experienced it this year during a visit to one of our groups abroad which has adopted the anthroposophical manner of contemplating the world, during a visit to our group at Palermo. As the ship approached Palermo, I suddenly realized: “The solution of a riddle will present itself to you, a riddle which can only be

solved easily here, at this place, through the immediate impressions which can be gained here.” Soon afterwards I found the solution of the riddle. The personality concerning whom I have just spoken to you in a theoretical manner, immediately appeared in the whole atmosphere of Sicily, I might say, in the whole astral body of Sicily. His presence was an altogether living one. In the whole atmosphere of Sicily continued to live a personality that is very enigmatic in many respects, the personality of *Empedocles*, the ancient philosopher. This ancient Greek philosopher has in fact lived in Sicily during the fifth century before Christ, and even external history knows that he was a profound initiate in many different spheres and that he accomplished magnificent things just here, in Sicily.

If to begin with, we turn, as it were, our spiritual gaze upon this man he will appear to us, from an occult standpoint in a very strange light. The occult fact which presents itself to us is the following. If we look back upon the development of Empedocles, if we follow his occupations as statesman, architect and philosopher, if we follow him upon his journeys, if we see him in the midst of his enthusiastic pupils initiating them into the various mysteries of the world — if we follow him spiritually in this manner, without the aid of external history, we shall discover in him a personality who possessed an infinite amount of scientific knowledge of the kind which is only known to a modern man. Empedocles had an altogether

modern mentality, a modern aura, and he was indeed constituted in such a way that he sought to discover the origin of the world. In fact, according to his degree of development and everything which had taken place, he would necessarily have found the Christ in his retrospective survey. But the Christ had not yet appeared. It was not possible as yet to find Him upon the earth; He was still absent from the earth. These experiences in particular made Empedocles waver and developed within him a strange desire, and in his case it transformed itself into something entirely different from what takes place in the superficial minds of modern times. This desire transformed itself into the passion to consider the world in a materialistic way. Lucifer approached him. We should try to form a vivid picture of the way in which this took place. Empedocles possessed a modern spirit, but at the same time he was initiated in many different mysteries. He was clairvoyant to a high degree. Let us now imagine vividly that his modern way of thinking made him feel inclined to consider the world from a materialistic aspect; he has, in fact, drawn up a materialistic system which describes the world more or less from the stand point of a modern materialistic chemist, namely, as a combination and separation of elements. The one difference is that Empedocles distinguishes only four elements. He thought that various beings arise according to the way in which these four elements combine. As a result of these thoughts he felt the strong desire to discover in a true and real way what lies behind these material elements, what

air and water really contain. If we peruse the Akasha Chronicle today and look into water, air, fire and earth we shall discover in them etherically the Christ. Empedocles could not find Him, but he felt the tremendous impulse to discover something in air and water, fire and earth, to find out what they really contain. And we can see how this personality is seized by the strong desire to penetrate at all costs into what constitutes the material elements. This desire finally induces him to make a kind of sacrifice. It is not merely a legend that Empedocles threw himself into the crater Aetna in order to unite himself with the elements. The luciferic force, the strong desire to grasp the elements, led him to a bodily union with the elements. The death of Empedocles continues to fill the atmosphere of Sicily, and this is a great mystery connected with this strange country.

Let us now picture the soul of Empedocles who has laid aside his body by allowing it to be burned. His soul is born again in a later period of time, when the Christ has already appeared upon the earth. Entirely new conditions now exist for this soul. In the past, this soul has, as it were, sacrificed itself to the elements. Now it is born again. But now it can discover the Christ when it looks back into time. And all the past knowledge concerning the elements rises up again in a new form, the knowledge which this soul once possessed arises in a completely new form. In fact, the personality of Empedocles was born again later, but at the present moment

it is not permissible for me to mention his name. If we study the reincarnation of Empedocles in a more northern country, if we observe him as he then lived at the turning point of the Middle Ages and the modern time and if we compare this character with the Empedocles who threw himself into Mount Aetna, we shall see livingly before us the gigantic impulse which has arisen through the fact that the Christ event has in the meantime taken place upon the earth.

What thus takes place in the case of this one definite personality applies, however, to every soul, to the souls of each one of you. At the time in which the Christ event was drawing nigh, all these souls have looked back with a certain feeling of discomfort into past, even if they have not felt the mighty impulse experienced by Empedocles. They felt uncomfortable because they had lost their bearings and because the time of the modern scientific man who looks back into the past ... was gradually approaching, and something resembling the case of the men of earlier times begins to spread ... If we go back to earlier times we find that those who have preserved this tradition faced the masses and related to them — let us imagine this vividly — mighty tales which are contained, for instance, in the legends told to the ancient Greeks. But this induced the ancient Greeks to experience the truth of these legends, when they were, let us say, in a special condition which was still possible at that time to a greater extent than now, and these legends gave them,

as it were, a push enabling them to look into the spiritual world. But the human beings lost this capacity. The inner force enabling them to rise into the spiritual world was lost to the extent in which intellectual knowledge began to develop. You may calculate and find in any little manual when our modern conceptions began to arise, these modern conceptions which children take up, if not with the mother's milk, at least with the school milk! These modern conceptions reach back to a few centuries before our Christian era. This is a tremendous turning-point. And if we wish to go back still further, if we wish to understand the ancient documents, it will not be possible for us to understand them, for now they appear to us merely as poems, legends and myths. We cannot go back further, and this is something which should really be borne in mind more clearly. More and more it will be the case that people who do not bring with them, as it were, an inherited disposition to understand the ancient documents, will be unable to understand them.

The opinion will gradually spread that there is a great field of illusion behind everything which is accepted as science, because the majority of scientists believes that now we fortunately know how the earth moves round, and that all the explanations of earlier times in this connection are nonsense. This opinion is already prevalent to-day. We go backwards into time ... The Copernican world-conception arises somewhat later, but even in the case of geometry we cannot

go back further than Euclid. And further back, behind all this, a modern man can only see black darkness. He cannot find wisdom and the primordial revelation, he cannot find the path which leads into them. If we really accept this as a fact, something resulting from the deepest anthroposophical studies may then condense itself to a fundamental conviction — and this may take place even in the simplest mind, provided the feelings are sound.

Man must, after all, reach the point of saying to himself “The form in which I see the world is not its true aspect.” If this were its true aspect it would not be necessary to investigate it. Investigation would not be necessary at all, for the world would immediately appear in its true aspect. Modern investigation, however, does not consider the world in this way. The Copernican system would not exist if men were simply to accept what the senses reveal to them. Even external science contradicts the experiences gained through the senses. If we progress we shall see that we cannot stay by what the senses give us, by what we obtain through the external experiences which we make in the physical world. These must in any case be corrected, even by external science. This fact is perhaps not generally recognised; nevertheless, it is true. As soon as we begin to understand our own being — even if it is only with the aid of ordinary thinking and with what we can learn to-day — we shall be obliged to admit that the essential point of everything is to

have an insight into the illusion created by the senses, for otherwise science would not exist and reflection would not exist. If this is indeed the case, we must discover something which enables us to understand without any difficulty in which direction and toward which goal the world is gradually developing. We shall find the confirmation of this fact if we consider matters a little in the light of Anthroposophy. We may therefore say to ourselves: Once upon a time there was a primordial wisdom; the human beings were constituted in such a way that they received a primordial wisdom which they could only see in pictures, but nevertheless they possessed such a primordial wisdom, and they have gradually lost the understanding for such a wisdom the more human evolution progressed; men were less and less able to grasp this primordial wisdom. And another fact is quite clear, namely, that they began to lose this understanding to the extent in which science and the intellectual understanding developed. We may now ask: What can have arisen at a certain definite moment?

Let us imagine the whole situation. Let us picture a man of pre-Christian times, who lived under certain conditions. He will have looked out into the world, he will have seen all manner of things, but within his soul there also lived the possibility of seeing behind these things. He still possessed this disposition. Consequently, it was an undeniable fact for him that there is an etheric body behind every flower. This was a

fact for him. Gradually he began to lose this capacity. He lost it because it was banished by the intellectual understanding which rules to-day. The intellectual capacity cannot be united with the other one, for they are two hostile forces. This is an undeniable fact, and every occultist knows by experience that the understanding, or ordinary thought, sears and burns the clairvoyant manner of looking upon things. Even in the course of history, the knowledge based upon the ancient clairvoyance was lost to the extent in which the understanding, or the intellect in the ordinary meaning, have arisen, and the loss of the old clairvoyant wisdom also implied the loss of the capacity to understand the ancient traditions. A few centuries had to pass, and the kind of man I have just described to you had to be replaced by another kind who might perhaps have said: "It would, of course, be a serious prejudice to think the truth can be discovered in the way in which the world presents itself to our senses. Human reason must supplement everything!" Particularly this belief in human reason was the decisive factor; human reason must first pounce upon the phenomena which appear to the senses and then grasp them logically.

Such a kind of man would perhaps have said: "The special advantage of the human being over all the creatures of the earth is the fact that he is endowed with reason, that he can understand cause and effect as they manifest themselves behind the sense-phenomena. He is able to discover this. And

his intellect enables him to communicate with other men through the means of speech. For it is easy to see that speech is a child of reason.” And he might also have said: “Reason is, of course, the highest of all things.” Now, if we wish to draw a vivid picture of such a person, we should imagine him saying to himself: “Rely on your understanding and reason, dissect everything with your reason, and then you will surely reach the truth!” Let us suppose that we are actually facing such a man. I have given you a description from a theoretical standpoint, yet this particular type of man has appeared very frequently. A characteristic thinker of this kind was Cicero, who lived shortly before Christ. If you study Cicero you will immediately see that he thinks exactly in this way, namely, that reason is able to grasp everything. It is not true that the world appears as it presents itself to the senses, nevertheless human reason is able to grasp everything! Just in the case of people who lived shortly before Christ we find an invincible faith in reason. They even identify reason with God himself, who rules within things. Cicero adopts this standpoint.

Let us suppose, however, that someone succeeds in discovering the secrets connected with all this. Let us suppose that someone contemplates all this in an entirely unprejudiced way and sees how everything results little by little. How would he then describe the whole period? Let us suppose that one century before Christ a man who is

endowed with deep insight contemplates all these things ... How would the whole course of history appear to him? Well, he would say: "We can see two currents in humanity. One is the old clairvoyant power, with a descending course. Reason appears in its place, and it roots out and destroys within the human being the possibility of looking into the spiritual world. A great darkness spreads over the spiritual world. Those who accept the authority of reason will indeed think that their reason can discover what lies behind things. But these people forget the true nature of reason, about which they talk so much. Reason is linked up exclusively with the brain. It is a force which can only use the brain as its instrument. It belongs to the physical world and must, therefore, share the qualities of the physical world" ... Such a man would say: "You may, if you like, rely on your intellect and I say that it enables you to grasp what lies behind things, since the things in themselves are not real. Consider, however, that reason itself belongs to these things. You are a physical being among other physical beings, and your reason belongs to the physical world. If you think that reason enables you to discover what lies behind all the other things, you will demolish the foundation under your feet." This is what he would say, and he would add: "Indeed, men are more and more inclined to use their reason, to rely upon their intellect. They have this inclination. But in doing so, they raise up before them a wall hiding the spiritual world, for they make use of an instrument which can not be applied to the spiritual

world, for it is limited to the physical world. Humanity, however, unfolds in the very direction of developing this instrument.” And if this man had known the real course of events, he would also have said: “If men return to the spiritual world at all, they should not only be able to use their intellect, which can be applied solely to the physical world, but an impulse must arise enabling them to ascend once more to the spiritual worlds, an impulse which drives the intellect itself along this upward path. But this can only take place,” this person would have said, “if something dies within the human being, if something which calls forth in him the firm belief in the exclusive rule of reason perishes. This must die.” In fact, we imagine the human being gradually descending into the material world and developing his brain more and more. If the human being were to depend exclusively on his reason, he would be unable to abandon it, to come out of it. His physical body would then deceive him and persuade him to do away with everything which cannot be grasped by earthly reason. But it is the physical body which dulls man in this manner, because it gradually develops to a very high degree, and man does not realise that he thus remains within the physical world. Try to imagine this and you will see that the human being is then caught as if in a trap. He is quite unable to escape out of himself. Human evolution has so far reached the point of preventing man from going out of his own self, and so he faces the danger, of being gradually overwhelmed by his physical body. What can help the human being at all in

this case? If just at the time when the intellect reaches this point, there arises the possibility of changing the intellect so, that the part which blinds it, dies, then this part must die. An impulse must arise which is able to overcome once and for all that part in man which can overwhelm him through a blind faith in mere reason. Try to feel the power of this impulse; try to feel that this was the meaning of human evolution! The bodily constitution developed in such a way that it would have overwhelmed man. He would have reached the point of thinking that he must remain within the physical world and yet be able to penetrate through Maya, without bearing in mind that he himself lived in this Maya through his intellect. This would have taken place had not something arisen which can tear him out of it, as soon as he accepts it, and which is able to counteract the fall into the physical sphere. Indeed, its influence reaches as far as the etheric body, so that the etheric body is then able to kill what leads man into a similar illusion. The human being would otherwise have remained imprisoned in this trap.

Let us now turn away from such a person who would have spoken in this way when the time of Christ Jesus was approaching, and let us consider the way in which a modern man, or anyone of us, would look at things. He would say to himself: If I consider the development of man in an unprejudiced way and see how the intellect, this instrument belonging to Maya, has gradually gained strength, I would

undoubtedly be on the wrong track if I follow merely the course of the world's evolution. For, this is arranged in such a way that if I do not take up within me the impulse which kills that part leading me astray in this direction, I am unable to free myself from the intellect. What must therefore have taken place? I must be able to look back upon a time in which this impulse has entered. I must find something within the historical evolution of humanity which brings about the fact that the continuous stream of evolution has been reversed in a materialistic sense. If to-day I were to look within my own being without finding anything of this kind, what would I then have to find? I would trace in that case the gradual growth of the intellect, until I reached a time, at the beginning of our era, when the intellect began to work ... and further back? There it grows dark, pitch black darkness rules there, and I shall need something entirely different. Then it will grow light, and here everyone must encounter the Christ! Anyone who is at all willing to believe in the possibility of progress, and that during the following incarnations he will have within him something which will lead him upwards and will prevent his being overwhelmed by Maya, must meet the Christ when he looks back into time. Upon looking back, everyone must encounter the Christ. This can give him an impulse leading him upwards.

Let us now suppose that the gospels did not exist, and that we would not need them as anthroposophists. Let us suppose that we do not need the gospels; that all we need is to study

the course of human evolution in an unprejudiced way and to say: What would become of every human being if he were unable to look back upon an event which has swung the whole meaning of the earlier course of evolution over to the other side? We simply must encounter the Christ if we go back into the course of evolution! Anthroposophists must be able to find Him, and the clairvoyants will find him under every circumstance. This is a mystery which is connected particularly with Christianity. Documents may be questioned. Indeed, the gospels are not real historical documents. All the clever people, Jensen and others, who decree in a trivially learned manner that the gospels do not exist and upon them as mere legends, have a certain justification for doing this, because they depend solely upon their external reason. But if we are anthroposophists we are able to say that we do not need the gospels; we only need the facts supplied by spiritual science itself, and if we go back into time we shall discover the living Christ, as He appeared to Paul in the event of Damascus. Paul has experienced in advance what we, too, are able to experience if we search for the Christ in a truly anthroposophical spirit. Paul was, after all, in the same position of a modern anthroposophist who does not wish to accept the gospels. At his time the gospels did not exist, but Paul was able to go to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, this did not convince him, for otherwise he would not have left Jerusalem. The events described in the gospels did not convince him. It is not necessary, therefore, that the contents of the gospels

should convince a modern person. All that is necessary is that he should be in a position to experience, through Anthroposophy, what Paul has experienced, and this experience will then become for him an event of Damascus. He will then have the proof of Christ's existence, in the same way as Paul, without the aid of documents.

Of course, this points to very deep things in human evolution, to extraordinarily deep things in the evolution of man. In a certain sense, every human being, even the simplest man, may experience what the *reincarnated Empedocles* has experienced during the 15th and 16th century, who looked back into earlier times and was able to see what he was unable to see before. Before, he had grown so uncertain that he threw himself into Mount Aetna. He cast his glance backwards during the 15th and 16th century and what he was unable to grasp in any way during his previous incarnation he was now able to grasp clearly through the Christ principle. And this enabled him to become one of the most remarkable personalities of the later era.

This is how matters appear to every human being, without the aid of any document, simply through retrospection. At some later time, all men will be able to look back into an earlier incarnation and they will distinguish exactly the incarnations before and after Christ. What may be felt to-day instinctively by a simple soul who reads the gospels, will arise,

later, in the form of knowledge. This is the chief difference between the gospels and other documents: they are the first documents which we must understand. The gospels are a great, beautiful and mighty point of transition. If we pass through it, light begins to spread, while everywhere else there is darkness.

It is indeed so. Christianity is only at the beginning of its evolution, and a modern man may find that he often loses his thread when he investigates earlier things. But if he returns to one of the events in the life of the Christ he will feel inspired, and it will grow light about him. Even a simple person may experience what occultists discover, namely, he will be able to feel within his soul a reflection, as it were, of what I have just explained. He may feel very depressed owing to his human weaknesses and mistakes and he may admit to himself: "What I am to-day, is the result of all the generations!" But then he would deny this and would have to admit to himself, instead, that he himself has been his own father and his own mother. There is, consequently, something within us connecting us with the rest of humanity, and we may feel very depressed by all human mistakes, weaknesses and illnesses. Nevertheless, even the simplest soul always has the possibility of rising. These words should not be understood in the orthodox meaning. What is possible for an occultist is also possible for the simplest soul. Such a simple man may feel as weak possible, but if he begins to read the gospels, strength

will flow out of the gospels, because the power of the Word streams out of them and penetrates into the etheric body. The gospels are strengthening words, words of strength. They do not speak merely to the intellect, but penetrate into the deeper forces of the soul. And they are not merely based upon the intellect which exists in Maya, but they penetrate into the deeper forces, which can, as it were, console the intellect concerning its own nature. This is the great strength of the gospels; they exist for every one of us, and this is the powerful element distinguishing them from all the other documents. This fact, too, may not be accepted, but its rejection would imply that the possibility of human progress is denied altogether.

You see, this points to a fact which cannot be grasped right away. And now you will be able to realize what was needed for the preparation of a person whom I have already set before your soul hypothetically, who announced, one century before our era: *“A man must come who will give us the impulse which will bring about the great turning point in the course of events.”*

This person was a significant man, and he also underwent the necessary preparation. For a long time, the attempt had already been made, among those who knew things, to bring about the possibility that at least a few people, as it were, should understand the times which were approaching, that

they should understand what was being prepared, namely, that, on the one hand, men were being drawn into a snare, and that, on the other hand, through the appearance of the Christ, they could be led upwards again. This was taught prophetically. The man who was chosen to teach this prophetically, more than one century before our era, within the circles of people who were able to understand these teachings, was an initiate of the community of the Essenes, which was closely related to the circles frequented by the Christ. He announced the coming of One Who would lead men upwards again. The man who taught this within the community of the Essenes was a very significant individuality. External history really knows very little about him, but at least a few writers mention the legends referring to him which were handed down traditionally. Thus he is not merely a mythological character, or one who is named exclusively in occultism, He lived a hundred years before Christ and he even instructed one of his five or six pupils to write down his teachings. One of the pupils of this man, who drew attention to the Christ and announced His coming, understood the meaning of his teachings. This man, therefore, had a pupil, who was called Matthew, and he wrote down the mysteries relating to the Christ. The individuality who taught them was *Jeshu ben Pandira*. [Compare the lecture published in German by the Philos. Anthropol. Verlag "Jeshu ben Pandira, der Vorbereiter für ein Verständnis des Christus-Impulses."] He had to suffer martyrdom because he taught these things,

he was stoned to death in his own country, and afterwards his lifeless body was hanged. We should not confuse Jeshu ben Pandira with Jesus of Nazareth. Jeshu ben Pandira, the great prophet of the Christ, instructed his pupils to write down what he knew, and these documents then came into the hands of the man who included them with the mysteries which they contained, into the gospel which is known to us as the Gospel according to Matthew. It is an important, a preeminently important fact to realize, in the first place, the necessity of the Christ impulse, and in the second place, in an occult historical way, how Jeshu ben Pandira, through the fact that he was first stoned and immediately afterwards crucified, set forth, as it were, symbolically what took place afterwards in the Mystery of Golgotha. Christ was not stoned, but crucified, and a wonderful thing took place simultaneously with His death, for at the very moment when His blood streamed out of His wounds something passed over into the atmosphere of the earth, which brings to those who take up this event in their etheric body when they look back into time, to those who pass through this event and look, as it were, into the grave of the Christ, something leading them into a past filled with light, because they have passed through this moment. But without this experience, darkness spreads over everything which lies before it.

Consider what has been said to-day. It was my task to point this out to you. This subject, however, is so vast and

encompassing that mere indications can be given.

Nevertheless, these indications were treated so that if you investigate what you already know and what you carry in your heart, you will find to what a great extent life itself and your own soul prove the truth of what I have told you to-day.

On the Mystery Plays:

Lecture 1

Self-knowledge and the Portal of Initiation

IN Munich, as most of you will be aware, beside repeating last year's representation of Edouard Schuré's drama, *The Children of Lucifer*, we produced a *Rosicrucian Mystery Play* which seeks in manifold ways to represent some of the truths that are connected with our Movement. On the one hand, the Mystery Play was intended as an example, showing how that which inspires all theosophical life can also pour itself out into Art. On the other hand, we must not forget that this Play contains very much of our spiritual-scientific teachings, in a form in which we shall perhaps only discover it during years to come. This, above all, must not be misunderstood. You should take pains to read the things that are contained in it, — I do not say between the lines, for they are in the actual words, but they are there in a spiritual way. If you were really to take the Rosicrucian Mystery Play in earnest, and look for the things that it contains during the next few years, it would not be necessary for me to give any lectures at all for many years to come. You would discover many things which I am giving in lectures on all kinds of subjects.

It will, however, be more practicable for us to seek these things together than alone. In a certain sense, it is very good for that which lives in Spiritual Science to be among us in this form. To-day, therefore, taking our start from the Rosicrucian

Mystery Play, I should like to speak of certain properties of human self-knowledge. But we must first call to mind how the individuality, living and working in the body of Johannes Thomasius, is characterised in this Play. Hence, I should like this lecture on self-knowledge to begin with a recitation of those passages which refer to the self-knowledge of Johannes.

(The second scene: 'Know thou thyself, O man!' and the ninth scene 'O man, feel thou thyself!' were read out aloud at this point.)

In these two scenes, 'Know thou thyself, O man' and 'O man, feel thou thyself,' two stages of development in the unfolding of the soul are brought before us. I beg you not to think it strange if I now say the following: I am in no way opposed to the Rosicrucian Mystery Play being interpreted as I have sometimes heard other poems interpreted in theosophical circles. For in this Rosicrucian Mystery there may well come before our souls in a more living and immediate form what I have often said in relation to other works of art I have interpreted. I never hesitated to say: Though the plant or flower does not know what the human being who beholds it finds therein, nevertheless, the flower contains what he finds. I said this once when I was about to interpret *Faust*. It is not necessary for the poet, when he actually wrote the poem, to have exactly known or felt in the

words all that was afterwards found there. I can assure you, nothing of what I may now or subsequently attach to this Mystery Play, and of which I know that it is really contained therein, came to me consciously when the several scenes were created. The scenes grew out of themselves, like the leaves of the plant. One cannot produce such a form by first having the idea, and then translating it into the outer form. I always found it very interesting to see it coming into being, scene by scene. Other friends, too, who learnt to know the scenes one by one, always said. How strange it is; it always comes out differently from what one had imagined.

The Mystery Play is like a picture of the evolution of mankind in the evolution of a single man. And I will emphasise, for real and true feeling one cannot shroud oneself in abstractions when one wishes to set forth Theosophy. Each human soul is different from another, and must indeed be different; for everyone experiences his own evolution, in all that is given as our general teaching, we can only receive guiding lines. Hence the full truth can only be given if we take our start from an individual soul, — representing a single human individuality in a fully individual and characteristic way. If, therefore, any one studies the character of Johannes Thomasius, seeking to translate into theories of human evolution what is specifically said of him, he would be making an entire mistake. He would be much in error if he imagined: ‘I myself shall experience just what

Johannes Thomasius experienced.' That which Johannes Thomasius has to experience applies indeed to every man as to its general tendency and direction. Nevertheless, to undergo these individual experiences one would have to be Johannes Thomasius! Everyone is a Johannes Thomasius his own way. Thus, everything is set forth in a fully individual way, and by this very fact it presents in as true a way as possible, through individual figure, the characteristic evolution of the human being in his soul.

Therefore, a broad basis had to be created. Thomasius is first shown on the physical plane. Single experiences of his soul are indicated, such, for example, as this one, which cannot but be of great significance: — We are told how at a time not very long ago, he deserted a being who was devoted to him in faithful love. That is a thing that often happens, but it works differently on one who is striving to undergo an inner evolution. It is a deep and profound truth: He who is to undergo a higher evolution does not attain self-knowledge by brooding into himself, but by diving other beings. By self-knowledge we must know that we are come from the Cosmos. And we can only dive down by transmuting our own self into another self. To begin with we transmuted into the beings once near to us in life. This therefore, is an example of the conscious experience of one's own self within another. Johannes, having got deeper down into himself, with his self dives down in self-knowledge into another being — into that

being whom he had brought bitter pain. So, then we see how Thomasius dives down in self-knowledge. Theoretically we may say: 'If you would know the flower, you must dive into the flower.' Self-knowledge, however, is most readily attained when we dive down into the events in the midst of which we ourselves have stood in some other way. So long as we are in our own self, we go through the outer experiences. Over against a true self-knowledge, that which we think of the life of other beings is a mere abstraction. For Thomasius, to begin with, the experiences of other human beings become his own experience. Here, for example, was one Capesius, describing his experiences. We can well understand how such experiences arise in life; Thomasius, however, receives them differently. He listens, but his listening (it is described so in one of the later scenes) is different. It is as though he were not there at all with his ordinary self. Another, deeper faculty reveals itself. It is as though he himself entered into the soul of Capesius and experienced what is going on within that soul.

It is exceedingly significant when he becomes estranged from himself. For this indeed is inseparable from self-knowledge: one must tear oneself free of oneself and go out into another. It is indeed significant for Thomasius when, having heard all these speeches, he finds himself obliged to say: —

“A mirrored picture ‘twas of fullest life
That showed me to myself in clearest lines:
This spirit-revelation makes me feel
That most of us protect and train one trait
And one alone in all our character,
Which thus persuades itself it is the whole.
I sought to unify these many traits
In mine own self and boldly trod the path
Which here is shown, to lead unto that goal;
And it hath made of me a nothingness.”

Why did it make of him a nothingness? Because he dived down through self-knowledge into the other beings. Brooding into his own inner life, makes a man proud and arrogant. True self-knowledge leads at first to the pain of diving down into other selves. Johannes listens to the words of Capesius. He experiences in the other soul the words of Felicia. He follows Strader into his cloistered loneliness. All this, to begin with, is abstraction; he has not yet come to the point to which he is afterwards guided through his pain. Self-knowledge is deepened by meditation in the inner self. That which was shown in the first scene, is now revealed by deepened self-knowledge, which — rising out of the abstraction — enters into reality. The words which you have heard resounding through the centuries — words of the Delphic oracle — gain a new life for the human being at this point; yet to begin with it is a life of estrangement from his own self. Johannes, as one

who is in process of self-knowledge, dives down into all other beings. He lives in air and water, rocks and streams, — not in himself. All these words which we can only shew resounding from outside, are really words of meditation. At the very moment when the curtain rises, we must conceive the words that sound forth in all self-knowledge — we must conceive them far, far louder than they can be presented on the stage. Then the self-knower dives down into a multitude of other beings. He learns to know the things into which he enters thus. And now the same experience, which he already had before, comes before him in a most terrible way. It is a deep truth. Self-knowledge, when it takes its course in this way, leads us to look at ourselves quite differently than we ever did before. It leads us to learn to feel our own Ego as a stranger!

In fact, it is the outer vehicle of man which he feels most near to himself. A human being of our time is apt to feel it far more nearly when he cuts his finger than when he is hurt by a false judgment passed by his fellowman. How much more does it hurt the human being of to-day when he cuts his finger than when he hears a false judgment! Yet he is only cutting into his bodily vehicle.

This is the thing that emerges in self-knowledge: we learn to feel our body as an instrument. It is not so difficult for a man to feel his hand as an instrument when he uses it to grasp an object; but he now learns to feel the same with one

or another portion of the brain. This feeling of the brain as of an instrument occurs at a certain stage of self-knowledge. Things become localised. When we drive a nail in the wall, we know that we are doing it with a certain tool. Now we are also aware that in doing so we make use of this or that part of the brain. These things become objective — external to us. We learn to know our brain as something that is really separated from us. Self-knowledge brings about this objectivity of our own bodily vehicle, until at length it is as foreign to us as our external tools. And as we begin thus to feel our bodily nature as an objective thing, thereby we also begin to live in the outer Universe. Only because a man still feels his body as his own, he is not clear about it; he thinks there is a boundary between the air outside him and the air within. He says to himself that he is there within; and yet, within him is the same air as outside him. Take then the substance of the air; it is within and at the same time without. And so it is in every case so it is with the blood, and with all that is bodily. In a bodily sense, man cannot be either within or without. That is mere Maya. Inasmuch as the bodily 'inside' becomes external to us, it is prolonged into the world outside us, into the Cosmos. And so it is, in deed and truth.

The pain of feeling oneself a stranger to oneself, — this was intended in the first scene. It is the pain of feeling oneself estranged from oneself, by finding oneself in all outer things. Johannes' own bodily vehicle is like an entity that is outside

him. Feeling his own body outside of himself, he sees the other body approaching him, — the body of the being whom he has deserted. This other one approaches him, and he has learned to speak with that other being's own words. This tells him that his self has now expanded to the other being:

“Ah, bitter sorrow hath he brought to me;
So utterly I trusted him of old.
He left me lonely with my sorrow's pain,
He robbed me of the very warmth of life,
And thrust me deep beneath the chill, cold ground.”

The reproach comes vividly into our soul, only when we are bound to utter the suffering of the other one, with which our own self is connected; for our own self has now dived down into the other self. Such is the real deepening of things. Johannes at this point is really *in* the pain which he has caused; he feels himself poured out into it and again awakened. What does he really experience? Taking it all in all, we find that the ordinary man undergoes such an experience only in the state that we call Kama-loca. The candidate for Initiation has to experience, already in this world, what the normal human being undergoes in the spiritual world. He must undergo within the physical body the Kama-loca experiences which in the ordinary course are undergone outside the physical. Therefore, all the characteristics which we may understand as properties of

Kama-loca are presented here as experiences of Initiation. Just as Johannes dives down into the soul whom he has given pain, so must the normal man in Kama-loca dive down into the souls to whom he gave pain and suffering. As though a box-on-the-ears were given back to him, so must he feel the pain. There is only this difference: while the Initiate experiences these things within the physical body, the other human being undergoes them after death. He who experiences them now will live in quite a different way when Kama-loca comes.

However, even that which man can undergo in Kama-loca, may be experienced in such a way that he is not yet free. It is a difficult task to become completely free. It is one of the most important experiences of spiritual development in our time (in the Graeco-Latin age it was not yet so) to realise how infinitely difficult it is to get free of oneself. A most important Initiation-experience is expressed in the words wherein Johannes feels himself fettered to his own lower body. His own being appears to him as a being to whom he is enchained: —

“I feel the chains that hold me chained to thee.
So fast was not Prometheus riveted
Upon the naked rocks of Caucasus,
As I am riveted and forged to thee.”

That is a thing essentially connected with self-knowledge. It

is a secret of self-knowledge.; we must only apprehend it in the right way.

Have we really become better men by becoming earthly men, — by diving down into our earthly vehicles? Or should we be better if we were able to be alone in our inner life, — if we could simply cast the vehicles aside? Superficial people may well ask, when they first meet with the theosophical life, Why should one first dive down into an earthly body? The simplest thing would be to remain above; then we should not have all the misery of diving down. Why have the wise Powers of Destiny plunged us into the body?

In simple feeling, one can explain a little if one says that Divine-spiritual forces have been working at this earthly body for millions of years. Precisely inasmuch as it is so, we should make more of ourselves than we have the force to do. Our inner forces are inadequate! The fact is, if we merely wish to be what we are in our own inner being, — if we are not corrected by our vehicles — we cannot possibly be equal yet to what the Gods have made. Life shows itself in this way. Here upon Earth, man is transplanted into his bodily sheaths - sheaths that have been prepared by beings during three Worlds. Man still has the task of building and developing his inner being. Here between birth and death, man is an evil being through the elasticity of his bodily sheaths. In Devachan he is once more a better being, for he is there received by the

Divine-spiritual beings who pour him through with their own forces. In time to come — the Vulcan era — he will be a perfect being. Here upon Earth, he is a being who gives way to one lust or another. The heart, for example, is so wisely ordered that it withstands for decades the attacks which man directs against it with his excesses — as, for instance, with his drinking coffee.

Such as he can be to-day by virtue of his own forces, man goes his way through Kama-loca. In Kama-loca he shall learn to know what he can by his own force alone. And that, in truth, is nothing good. Man, to describe himself, cannot describe himself with any predicate of beauty. He must describe himself as Johannes does:

“Yet in what shape know I myself again.
My human form is lost and gone from me;
Like some fierce dragon do I see myself;
Begotten out of primal lust and greed.
And clearly do I see how up till now
Some dim deluding veil of phantom forms
Hath hid from me mine own monstrosity.”

Our inner being is harnessed, as it were elastically, and is thus hidden from us. Truly we learn to know ourselves as ‘some fierce dragon’ when we learn to know Initiation. Therefore these words are derived from the very deepest

feeling; they are not words of morbid introspection, but of true self-knowledge: —

“Oh yea, I know thee; for thou art myself:
Knowledge doth chain to thee, pernicious beast,
Chain mine own self — pernicious beast — to thee;”

Fundamentally the two are the same; first as the object, then as the subject. ‘I willed to flee from thee ...’

This flight, however, leads him all the more into himself. And now the ‘company’ emerges — in which we really are when we look into ourselves. This ‘company’ consists of our own cravings and passions, — all that we did not notice before, because every time we wanted to look into ourselves our gaze was diverted to the world around us. Compared to the inner life into which we tried to look, the world is a world of wondrous beauty. Here, then, we cease to look into ourselves in the illusion or Maya of life.

When human beings around us indulge in vain chatter and we grow tired of it, we take flight in solitude. For certain stages of development, it is important to do so. We can collect ourselves. *We should* collect ourselves in this way; it is a means of self-knowledge. Nevertheless, there are these experiences we come into a ‘company’ where we can no more be lonely. For at this stage — it matters not, whether within us or without us — beings appear who will not let us be

alone. Then comes the experience which man is meant to have. Solitude itself brings him into the worst society of all: —

“Man’s final refuge hath been lost to me;
I have been robbed of solitude.”

All these are real experiences, but you must not let their very intensity become a snare. Do not imagine, if such experiences are presented in their full intensity, that you should therefore be afraid. Do not imagine that these things are meant to divert any one from diving down himself into these waters. One may not experience them at once with the same intensity as Johannes did. He had to experience them thus for a definite purpose, — in a certain sense, even prematurely. Regular self-development will go at quite another pace. The fact that it takes place in Johannes so tumultuously, should be conceived as an individual matter. Because he is an individuality who has suffered shipwreck inasmuch as he infringes on these laws, therefore it all takes place in him in a far more tempestuous way. He learns to know these laws, in that they throw him deeply out of his balance.

Nevertheless, what is here described of Johannes is intended to call forth the feeling that true self-knowledge has nothing to do with trite or easy phrases. Self-knowledge, if it be true, can do no other to begin with than to lead through

suffering and grief. Things that were hitherto a refreshment take on another countenance when they appear in the field of self-knowledge. No doubt, we can pray for solitude, even though we have already found self-knowledge. Nevertheless in certain moments of self-knowledge, solitude may be the very thing we lose, if we seek it in our hitherto accustomed way. It is in moments when we flow out into the objective world, and when the lonely one suffers the direst pain of all.

This pouring-out of ourselves into other beings, — we must learn to feel it rightly if we would feel what this Play contains. It is conceived with a certain aesthetic feeling; it is ‘spiritually realistic,’ through and through. A realist with true aesthetic feeling suffers a certain pain at an unrealistic presentation. Here again, that can give satisfaction at a certain stage can be a source of pain at another. All this depends upon the way of self-knowledge. When for example you have understood a play of Shakespeare’s — a great work, in the external world — it may no doubt be a source of aesthetic pleasure to you. Nevertheless, there may occur a moment of development when you are no longer satisfied. You feel your inner being rent as you go on from scene to scene. You no longer see any necessity in the sequence of one scene after another. You feel it quite unnatural that one scene is placed next to the other. Why so? Because there is nothing to hold the scenes together, — only the writer Shakespeare, and the onlooker. There is an abstract principle of causality and no reality of

being in the sequence of the scenes. It is a characteristic of Shakespeare's dramas; nothing is indicated that works karmically through and through and holds the whole together.

The Rosicrucian Mystery Play, on the other hand, is realistic — spiritually realistic. Much is required of Johannes Thomasius. Without actively partaking in any important role, he is there the stage. He is the one in whose soul it is all taking place. What is described is the development of the soul — the real experiences that are undergone in the soul's development.

The soul of Johannes, realistically, spins one scene out of another. Here, then, we see that the realistic and the spiritual are in no contradiction to each other. The 'materialistic' and the spiritual need not — although they can — be in contradiction to each other. The realistic and the spiritual certainly need not be in contradiction to each other. Moreover, a materialist can thoroughly admire what is realistic in a spiritual sense. Shakespeare's dramas can certainly be described as realistic in terms of an aesthetic principle. But you will also understand that an Art which goes hand in hand with Theosophy eventually leads to this: — For him who experiences his own self in the Cosmos, the whole Cosmos becomes an Ego-being. Therefore we cannot abide it that anything should meet him in the Cosmos which does not stand in relation to the Ego-being. Art will in this respect have

to learn that which will bring it to the principle of the Ego. For in effect, Christ once upon a time brought us the I. In the most varied spheres this I will live and find expression.

This human reality of the soul, and on the other hand this dismemberment in the world outside, shows itself also in another way. If at that time someone asked: Which person is Atma, which is Buddhi, and which Manas? ... truly it was a dreadful Art if it had to be thus interpreted, as saying: 'This character or that is a personification of Manas.' There are such theosophical abuses, trying to interpret things in this direction. One could only say of a work of Art that had to be interpreted in such a way, Poor work of Art! Certainly, for Shakespeare's plays it would be utterly false and laughable. These are but illnesses of childhood in the theosophical movement, and we shall wean ourselves of them in time. But it is necessary to draw attention to them. Someone might even set to work and look for the nine members of human nature in the Ninth Symphony!

Yet it is right in a certain sense that the single and united human nature is also distributed among many human beings. One human being has this colouring of soul, and another that. Thus, we can see the human beings before us, representing many sides of the total human nature. Only it must be conceived in a realistic way, it must arise out of the very nature of things. Even as human beings meet us in the

ordinary world, there too they represent the several sides of human nature. As we unfold ourselves from incarnation to incarnation, we shall become a totality in time. To present the underlying truth of these things, the whole of life must be dissolved. So, it is in the Rosicrucian Mystery Play. What is intended, in a certain sense, to represent Maria, is dissolved among the other figures who are about her as her companions and who with her together constitute an Ego-hood. Qualities notably of the Sentient Soul are to be seen in Philia; qualities of the Intellectual or Mind-soul in Astrid; qualities of the Spiritual Soul in Luna. And in this sense their names are chosen.

The names are chosen for the several beings according to their nature. Not only in the names; in the whole way in which the words are placed, the characterisation of the three — Philia, Astrid and Luna — is exactly graded. This is especially true of the seventh scene, where the Spiritual — Devachan — is to be shown. The beginning of the seventh scene is a far better characterisation of ‘Sentient Soul, Intellectual Soul and Spiritual Soul’ than can otherwise be given in mere words. Human figures are shown, in answer to the question: What is ‘Sentient Soul,’ what is ‘Intellectual Soul’ and what is ‘Spiritual Soul’? In Art, the different stages can be shown, through the whole way in which these figures stand there. In the human being they flow into one another. Once they are dissolved from one another, they present themselves in this way: Philia

places herself into the Universal All, Astrid into the elements, while Luna goes outward in self-action and self-knowledge. And inasmuch as they present themselves in this way, the Devachanic scene contains all that can represent Alchemy in the true sense of the word. The whole of Alchemy is there contained; only we must gradually find it out. It is given not in the mere abstract content, but in the life and being of the words. Therefore, you should not only hear *what* is said, — and above all, not only what each individual speaks; — you should hear *how* they speak, in relation to one another. The Sentient Soul inserts herself into the astral body here, then, we have to do with weaving astrality. The Intellectual Soul inserts herself into the ether-body; here, then, we have to do with living, moving ether-essence. Lastly, we see how the Spiritual Soul adorns herself and with inner firmness pours herself into the physical body. That which works through the Soul, as light within the soul, is given in the words of Philia. That which works in an etheric way, so that we stand over against what is true, is given in Astrid. That which gives inner firmness, so that it is united with the physical body which is primarily solid, is given in Luna We must be sensitive to this.

Philia (Sentient Soul)

Ich will erfüllen mich

I will myself imbue

Mit klarstem Lichtessein

With clearest rays of light

Aus Weltenweiten.

From cosmic spaces wide.

Ich will eratrn mir

I will breathe deep within

Belebenden
Klangesstoff

Sound-substance that
gives life

Aus Aetherfernen,

From distant ether-
bounds,

Dass dir, geliebte
Schwester,

Dear sister, that thou
may'st

Das Werk gelingen
kann.

Succeed in this thy work.

Astrid (Intellectual Soul)

Ich will verweben

Through all the
streaming light

Erstrahlend Licht

I will weave darkness in

Mit dämpfender Finsternis,

To cloud its radiant
beam.

Ich will verdichten

I will make dense and
thick

Das Klanges leben.

The living life of sound;

Es soll erglitzernd klingen,

That glowing it may
sound

Es soll erklingend glitzern,

And sounding it may
glow.

Dass du, geliebte
Schwester,

Dear sister, that thou
may'st

Die Seelenstrahlen lenken
kannst.

Direct the soul-life's
rays.

Luna (Spiritual Soul)

Ich will erwärmen Seelenstoff

Soul substance will I
warm,

Und will erhärten
Lebensäther.

Life's ether harden
too.

Sie sollen sich verdichten,

That they may thus
condense

Sie sollen sich erfüllen,

And may thus feel
themselves

Und in sich selber seiend,

As living in
themselves

Sich schaffend halten;

And powerful to
create.

Dass du, geliebte Schwester,

Dear sister, that thou
may'st

Der suchenden
Menschenseele

Prove wisdom's
certainty

Des Wissens Sicherheit
erzeugen Kannst.

To mankind's
seeking soul.

I draw your attention to the fact that Philia, in the last line but one, uses the words 'Dass *dir*, geliebte Schwester.' In Astrid's words we have the darker sound 'Dass *du*, geliebte Schwester,' entering into the denser element. '*Dass du, ... dass dir ...*' And now in Luna's words it is interwoven with the still more weighty sound, 'in *suchenden* Menschenseele.' Here the *u* is so interwoven with the neighbouring consonants as to gain a still closer density.

These are the things we can characterise. They are indeed like this. It depends above all on the *manner*, not on the mere content. Compare the further words of Philia: —

Ich will erbitten von
Weltengeistern,

From cosmic spirits I

Dass ihres Wesens Licht

Will beg their being's
light

Entzücke Seelensinn,

The soul-sense to
enchant,

Und ihrer Worte Klang

The sound too of their
words

Beglücke Geistgehor;

To charm the spirit's
ear;

with the quite different way in which Astrid speaks: —

Ich will die
Liebesstöme,

The love-streams will I guide

Die Welt
erwärmenden

That will fill the world with
warmth

Zu Herzen leiten

Unto the heart of man

Dem Geweihten;

Who is initiate;

In all these words there is conveyed the inner life and being of the Devachanic element of the world. Through these things we must realise (and for this reason I mention them) that when self-knowledge begins to go out into the outer life and being of the Universe, we need to wean ourselves of all one-sidedness. We can but experience in a dead and Philistine way that which is present at each single point of existence. It makes us rigid to be held fast at a single point in space and to imagine that we can express the truth in words. Mere words cannot express the truth so well, for it is all involved in the actual physical sound. We must feel the quality of expression also.

Such an important process as the self-knowledge of Johannes is only rightly experienced when he courageously achieves it, when he grasps it bravely. This is the next act. Self-knowledge has shattered us and cast us down. Now, having learned in the Universe outside — having perceived the Cosmos as related to us; having known the very being of other beings, — now we begin to take it *into* ourselves. Now we make bold to *live* what we have known. It is only half the battle to dive down, as Johannes did, into a being to whom we brought suffering — whom we ‘thrust deep beneath the chill, cold ground.’ We now feel differently; we take courage to balance-out the pain. Then we dive down into this life, and in our own being we speak differently. This, to begin with, is what meets us in the next scene.

While in the second scene the other being called to
Johannes:

“Ah, bitter sorrow hath he brought to me;
So utterly I trusted him of old.
He left me lonely with my sorrow’s pain,
He robbed me of the very warmth of life,

And thrust me deep beneath the chill, cold ground.”

— now, in the ninth scene, now that Johannes has
experienced himself at the place whither all self-knowledge
drives us, now; the same being calls to him:

“Thou must find me again and ease my pain.”

This is the other side. First the shattering experience, and
then the needed compensation. Therefore, the other being
calls to him: ‘Thou wilt find me again.’

This lifting of experience into the Universe — this filling of
the self with living experience of the Universal All — could be
presented in no other way. True self-knowledge — emerging
as it does out of the Cosmos — could only be presented in
that Johannes awakened with the very same words. Quite
naturally it must begin thus in the second scene: —

“‘Tis thus I hear them, now these many years,
These words of weighty import all around.”

But then, when he has dived down into the ground of earth,
— united himself with the earth beneath, — then there arises
in his soul the force to let the words arise in a new form. That
is essential (in the ninth scene):

“... For three long years
I have sought strength of soul, with courage winged,
Which doth give truth unto these words, whereby
A man may free himself to conquer first;
Then conquering himself may freedom find ...”

Then come the words: ‘Know thou thyself, O man!’ by
contrast to the words in the second scene: ‘O man, feel thou
thyself!’

Again, and again, the same picture meets us. While on the
one hand the scene goes downward:

“It seems mine own peculiarities
And all the world besides live in these words:
‘Know thou thyself, O man! Know thou thyself!’”

afterwards it is reversed; it changes. The scene portrays the
real process. So, too, we heard the terrible, shattering word in

the second scene: —

“But then, Maria, does thou realise
Through what my soul hath fought its way but now?”

... ..
... ..

“Man’s final refuge hath been lost to me:
I have been robbed of solitude.”

And in the ninth scene it is shown how his being only now gains confidence and certainty. Such is the congruence of the two scenes. These are not purposeful constructions. The real experiences are so and must be so — quite as a matter of course. Thus, we should feel how in a soul such as Johannes Thomasius, self-knowledge is gradually purified, till it becomes living self-experience. And we should feel how this experience of Johannes is distributed over many human beings. His own self-knowledge is distributed over all the human beings in whom — in their single incarnations—the several portions of his being are expressed. In the Sun-Temple at the last, a whole company of human beings are there. They all are there like a tableau, and yet all together are a single man. The properties of a single human being are distributed among them all. It is at bottom a single human being. A pedant would say: ‘Then there are too many parts, there should be nine instead of twelve.’ Reality, however,

does not create so as to agree with theories; yet it is more in agreement with the truth than if in regular and theoretic fashion the several members of the human being were to be marched on to the stage.

Imagine yourself now in the Sun-Temple. There are the single human beings, placed in the actual way in which they belong together karmically. There they are standing together, even as Karma has put them -together in life. And now imagine: Johannes himself is there, and the character of every single one is reflected in his soul. Each single one is a soul-quality of Johannes. What, then, has happened — if we sum up the result? Karma has brought them together, as at a nodal point of Karma. Nothing is meaningless, aimless or purposeless. All that the single human beings have done, signifies not only single events, but in each case an experience of Johannes' soul. Everything takes place twice over: in the Macrocosm and in the Microcosm — the soul of Johannes. And that is his Initiation.

For instance, as Maria is to Johannes himself, so is an, important member of his soul to another member of the soul. These are the real congruences, strictly carried out. That which is action outwardly, — inwardly in Johannes is a process of evolution. That which the Hierophant says in the third scene is about to happen here: —

“Within our circle there is formed a knot
Of threads that Karma spins, world-fashioning.”

The knot has been formed. The well-tied knot reveals whither all is leading. On the one hand is the absolute reality — the way in which Karma spins, world-fashioning. It is no aimless spinning. It is the knot as the Initiation-process in Johannes’ soul. And yet, such is the whole, that a single human individuality is there over and above them all. It is the Hierophant, who plays his active part and guides the several threads.

You need only think of the Hierophant in his relation to Maria. This passage in the third scene can indeed illumine what self-knowledge is. It is no joke to go out of oneself; it is a very real process. The human vehicles are deserted by the inner force; then they remain behind and become a battlefield for subordinate powers. The very moment when Maria is sending down to the Hierophant the ray of love, can be presented in no other way than thus: Down there is the body, taken hold of by the power of the Adversary, and saying the very opposite of what is going on above. Above, the ray of love rays down; below, a curse is uttered. These then are the contrasting scenes: Devachan in the seventh scene, Maria describing what she actually did; and in the third scene the world below, where, as the body is left behind, the curse of the demonic Powers against the Hierophant is uttered. Here

you have two complementary pictures. It would be very bad if one had to construct them so, artificially.

To-day, then, I have based my lecture on one aspect of the Mystery Play. I hope we have thus been able to illumine certain characteristic facts that underlie Initiation.

The fact that certain things have had to be sharply emphasised — so as to describe the processes of Initiation — should not render you pusillanimous in striving for the spiritual world. Descriptions of dangers have no other purpose than to steel the human being against adversary powers. The dangers are there, the pains and sufferings are certainly before us. It would be a very poor aspiration if we were only willing to ascend into the higher worlds, so to speak, by the most comfortable ways. The spiritual worlds cannot be attained as comfortably as in modern railway trains, where you simply let yourself be rolled along, or as the outer material culture generally does it in the things of outer life. That which is here described is not intended to make us lacking in courage; quite on the contrary. Our courage shall be steeled precisely by making ourselves acquainted in this way with the attendant dangers of Initiation.

Just as it is in Johannes Thomasius, whose tendency made him incapable of guiding the brush any longer, and this was translated into dire pain, and pain at length into knowledge; so

too, all that which kindles pain and grief will be translated into knowledge.

But we must seek the path in real earnest. We can only do so by realising that the theosophical truths are not so simple after all. They are deep truths of life, — so much so that we can never come to an end in seeking to comprehend them. Examples of life itself enable us most nearly to comprehend the world. We can speak far more exactly of the conditions of higher development when we describe the development of Johannes, than we can do when we describe the human being's development in general. In the book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment*, the higher evolution is described such as it can be for every human being. The pure possibility, which can indeed be realised, is there described. When we describe Johannes on the other hand, we describe a, single human being, and in so doing it is not possible to us to portray higher development in the abstract.

I hope you will not find occasion to say that after all I have not yet told you the truth. The fact is, there are two extremes, and we must find the grades between them. All I can do is again and again to give you hints and suggestions. These must then live in your hearts and souls. After the hints, I recently gave you on St. Matthew's Gospel I said, 'Try not to remember the literal words, but when you go out into the world try to create in heart and soul that which the words will

there have become. Try not to read only in Lecture Cycles, but also with earnestness to read in your own soul.' To do so, however, something must first have been given to you from outside; something must first have passed into your soul; otherwise, you would only be deceiving yourself. Try then to read it in your soul, and you will see that that which has sounded into your soul from outside will yet resound there in quite another form.

This and this alone would be the true anthroposophical striving: — In every lecture that is given, there should be as many different ways of understanding as there are listeners present. He who would speak about Theosophy can never wish to be understood in one way only; he would fain be understood in as many ways as individual souls are there. Spiritual Science can afford this.

One thing, however, is necessary — I do not say it as a mere aside. One thing is necessary, namely that every single way of understanding be true. It may be individual, but it must be true. Some people go so far in their individual ways of understanding that they understand the exact opposite of what is said!

Thus, if we speak of self-knowledge, we must also realise: It is more useful in self-knowledge to look for the mistakes within us and the True outside ourselves. We do not say:

‘Seek for the truth within thyself.’ No! You will find what is true in the world outside, it is poured out into the Universe. We must become free of ourselves through self-knowledge, and we must go through all these stages of the soul. Loneliness can be a very bad companion; but we can also feel the full measure of our own weakness, when in our soul we sense the echoing greatness of that Universe from out of which we are born. And at this moment we take courage. If we make bold to experience in life what we cognise, then we shall find it confirmed: — Out of the loss of the last refuge of our life there will spring forth life’s first and last refuge — life’s first and last security. It is that certainty which makes it possible for us first to overcome ourselves, and then to find ourselves anew—in that we find ourselves within the Cosmos.

Oh man, experience the World in thee!
Then only, going beyond thyself,
Thou wilt have found thyself in thy true being.

If we feel these things as living experience, they will become steps in our evolution.

On the Mystery Plays:

Lecture 2

Self-knowledge Portrayed in the Rosicrucian Mystery Play

The Portal of Initiation

In relation to the Rosicrucian Mystery I should today like to speak about certain peculiarities of human self- knowledge. For this we will have to remind ourselves how the individuality living in the body of Johannes Thomasius brings about a characterization of himself. Therefore, I wish to start my lecture with a recitation of the scenes from the Rosicrucian Mystery that portray the self-knowledge of Johannes.

SCENE TWO

A place in the open; rocks and springs. The whole surroundings are to be thought of as within the soul of Johannes Thomasius. What follows is the content of his meditation.

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

Johannes For many years these words
of weighty meaning I have heard.
They sound to me from air and water;
they echo up from depths of earth.
And just as in the acorn secretly
the structure of the mighty oak is pressed,
within the power of these words
there is contained

all that my thought can comprehend
about the nature of the elements,
of souls as well as spirits,
of time and of eternity.
The world and my own nature
are living in the words:
O man, know thou thyself!

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

And now! — within me
it is becoming terribly alive.
Around me darkness weaves,
within me blackness yawns;
out of the world of darkness it resounds,
out of soul-blackness it rings forth: —
O man, know thou thyself!

(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.

And now it robs me of myself.
I change with every hour of the day.
I melt into the night.
The earth I follow in her cosmic course.
I rumble in the thunder,
I flash within the lightning,
I am. — But oh, I feel
already separated from my being.
I see my body's shell.
It is an alien being outside myself;
it is remote from me.
There hovers nearer now another body

and with its mouth I have to speak:
'He brought me bitter sorrow;
I gave him all my trust.
He left me in my grief alone.
He robbed me of the warmth of life
and thrust me deep into cold earth.'
She, whom I left, unhappy one,
I was now she herself,
and I must suffer her despair.
Self-knowledge lent me strength
to pour myself into another self.
O cruel words!
Your light is quenched by its own power.
O man, know thou thyself!

*(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

You guide me back again
into the spheres of my own being.
Yet how do I behold myself!
My human form is lost;
as raging dragon I must see myself,
begot of lust and greed.
I clearly sense
how an illusion's cloud
has hid from me till now
my own appalling form.
The fierceness of my being will devour me.
And running like consuming fire
through all my veins I feel those words,
which hitherto with elemental power
revealed to me the truth of suns and earths.
They live within my pulse,
they beat within my heart,

and even in my thought itself I feel
those unfamiliar worlds flare up as wild
desires.

This is the fruitage of the words:
O man, know thou thyself.

(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.

There from the dark abyss,
what being gloats on me?
I feel the chains
that hold me fettered fast to you.
Prometheus was not chained so fast
upon the cliffs of Caucasus
as I am chained to you.
Who are you, horrifying being?

(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.

Oh, now I recognize you.
It is myself.
So knowledge chains to you, pernicious
monster,

*(Maria Enters, but is not noticed
By Johannes for the time being)*

me, myself, pernicious monster.
I sought to flee from you.
The worlds wherein my folly fled,

in order to be free from my own self,
have dazzled and have blinded me.
And blind I am once more within the blinded
soul.

O man, know thou thyself!

(There sounds from springs and rocks:)
O man, know thou thyself.

Johannes *(as if coming to himself, sees Maria. The
meditation passes over into inner reality.)*
Maria, you are here!

Maria I've looked for you, my friend,
although I know
how dear to you is solitude,
now that so many people's views
have flooded through your soul.
And I know, too, that at this time
my presence cannot help my friend.
An urge that is obscure
is driving me to you this very moment
when words of Benedictus have called up,
instead of light, such bitter grief
out of your spirit depths.

Johannes How dear to me is solitude!
How often have I sought it out,
to find in it myself,
whenever pain and joy of men have driven
me
into the labyrinths of thought.
Maria, that is past.
What Benedictus' words at first

drew forth out of my soul,
and what I then lived through
from everything those people said,
seems little to me now
if I compare it to the storm
which solitude has brought
into my heavy brooding.
O this solitude!
It drove me into cosmic spaces;
it tore me from myself.
Within that being to whom I brought such
grief
I rose again but as another,
and had to bear the pain
which I myself had caused.
The fierce, dark solitude
then gave me back myself
but only to appall me
at the abyss of my own being.

For me, man's final refuge,
for me, my solitude is lost.

Maria

I must repeat my words to you:
no one but Benedictus can now help you.
The firm support we lack,
we both must have from him.
For know, I also can no longer bear
the riddle of my life,
unless some sign from him
can make the answer clear to me.
The lofty wisdom, pointing out
that only semblance and illusion

are spread out over all our life
as long as human thinking grasps alone its
surface,
I've often held it up before my mind.
And every time it says:
you must be clear that an illusion
is shrouding you, though often it may seem
the truth:
that evil fruit could come from your desire
to wake that light in others
which lives in you yourself.
My soul's best part can see
that heavy feelings of oppression
in you, my friend,
from living at my side
are too a portion of the thorny path
that leads you to the light of truth.
You must live through each terror
to which illusion can give birth
before the truth reveals itself to you:
thus speaks your star.
Yet through this starry word is also clear to
me
that we must wander on the spirit paths
together.
But when I seek these paths,
there spreads itself before my gaze dark
night.
And blacker still becomes this night
through much which I must meet
as fruit of my own being.
We both must look for clarity in that light,
which for the eye can vanish
but never be extinguished.

Johannes

Maria, are you then aware

through what my soul has fought its way?
A heavy load indeed
has fallen upon you, dear friend.
Yet foreign to your being is that power
which has so wholly shattered me.
You can ascend to brightest heights of
truth;
you can direct your steady gaze
at men's confusion.
In light, in darkness,
you will affirm yourself.
But every moment can
deprive me of myself.
I had to plunge into those people
who through their words revealed
themselves just now.
I followed one into the cloister's loneliness,
I heard within the other's soul
Felicia's tales.
I was each one,
but for myself I died.
I'd have to have the faith
that beings spring from nothingness,
if I should cherish any hope
that from the nothingness in me
a human being ever could be born.
They force me out of fear into the darkness,
and hunt me through the darkness into fear,
these words imbued with wisdom:
O man, know thou thyself!

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

SCENE NINE

The same placed as in Scene Two

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

Johannes O man, unfold your being!
For three years now I've sought
for power of soul, with wings of courage,
to give these words their truth.
Through them a man who frees himself can
conquer,
and conquering himself, can find his
freedom.
O man, unfold your being!

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

This power of soul is rising from within
me
but only gently touching spirit hearing.
It harbours in itself the hope
that, growing, it will lead the human spirit
from narrowness far out to distant worlds,
just as the tiny acorn
mysteriously can expand
into the giant body of the noble oak.
The spirit in itself can bring to life
what weaves in air and water,
what has condensed to earth beneath.
For man can grasp
what has been taking hold of life

within the elements, in souls and spirits,
in time and in eternity.
The whole world-being lives within my soul,
when in the spirit there has taken root
the power that gives these words their truth:
O man, unfold your being!

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

I feel them sounding in my soul,
rousing themselves to give me strength.
There lives in me the light,
there speaks around me brightness,
there germinates in me the light of soul,
there works in me world-radiance.
O man, unfold your being!

(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.

*I find myself secure on every side,
wherever these words' power follows me.
It will illuminate for me the senses'
darkness
and will uphold me in the spirit heights.
It will enfill me with soul-substance
throughout all course of time.
The essence of the world I feel in me
and I must find myself in every world.
I see the being of my soul enlivened
through power that is my own.
I rest within myself.
I gaze on rocks and springs;*

*they speak the very language of my soul.
I find myself again within that being
to whom I brought such bitter grief,
and out of her I call out to myself:
'Oh, you must find me once again
and ease my suffering.'
The spirit's light will give me strength
to live the other self within myself.
O words of hope,
you stream forth power to me from all the
worlds:
O man, unfold your being.*

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

*You let me feel my weakness
and place me close to lofty aims of gods,
and blissfully I feel
such lofty aims' creative might
within my frail earth form.
Out of myself shall be revealed the purpose
for which the seed lies hidden in me.
And to the world I'll give myself
by living out my very being.
I want to feel these words' full power,
although they sound so gently.
They shall become for me a quickening fire
in my soul forces
and on my spirit paths.
I feel now how my thinking penetrates
deep hidden grounds of worlds
and how its radiant light illumines them.
Such is the germinating power of these
words:*

O man, unfold your being.

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

*From light-filled heights a Being shines
on me,
and wings I feel
that lift me up to him.
I too will free myself, as every being does
who overcomes himself.*

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

*I see that Being.
I shall become like him in future times.
The spirit will then free itself in me
through you, exalted goal of man.
I will now follow you.*

(Maria enters)

*My eye of soul has been awakened
by spirit beings who have welcomed me.
And as I gaze into the worlds of spirit,
I feel within myself that power:
O man, unfold your being.*

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

Maria, you are here?
>

*Maria My soul has led me here.
I could behold your star:
it shines in its full power.*

Johannes I can unfold that power from within me.

*Maria So closely are we linked
that your soul's life
lets its light shine into my soul.*

*Johannes Maria, you are then aware
of what has just revealed itself?
For me, man's core of confidence,
for me, the certainty of being has been
won.
I feel indeed the power of the words
which everywhere can guide me:
O man, unfold your being!*

*(From the springs and rocks resounds:)
O man, know thou thyself.*

In these scenes two levels of development, two steps in the unfolding of our souls, are shown.

Now please do not find it strange when I say that I do not mind interpreting this Rosicrucian Mystery just as I have interpreted other pieces of literature in our group. What I have often said about other poetry can also be brought before our souls in a lively, spontaneous way by this drama. In fact, I have never failed to point out that a flower knows little, indeed, of what someone who is looking at it will find in it; yet, whatever he finds *is* contained in it. And in speaking about *Faust*, I explained that the poet did not necessarily know or feel everything in the words he was writing down that later would be discovered in them. I can assure you that nothing of what afterward I could say about the Rosicrucian Mystery, and that I know now is in it, was in my conscious mind as I wrote down the various scenes. The scene-pictures grew one by one, just like the leaves of a plant. One cannot bring forth a character by first having an idea and then turning this into a concrete figure. It was continually interesting to me how each scene grew out of the others preceding it. Friends who knew the earlier parts said that it was remarkable how everything came about quite differently from what one could have imagined.

This Mystery Drama exists now as a picture of human evolution in the development of a single person. I want to emphasize that true feeling makes it impossible to throw a cloak of abstractions around oneself in order to present anthroposophy; every human soul is different from every other

and, at its core, must be different, because each one undergoes the experience of his own development. For this reason, instruction to the many can provide only general directions. One can give the complete truth only by applying it to a single human soul, to a soul that reveals its human individuality in all its uniqueness. If, therefore, anyone should consider the figure of Johannes Thomasius in such a way as to transfer the specific description of that figure to general theories of human development, it would be absolutely incorrect. If he believed that he would experience exactly what Johannes Thomasius experienced, he would be quite mistaken. For while in the widest sense what Johannes Thomasius had to undergo is valid for everyone, in order to have the same specific experiences one would have to *be* Johannes Thomasius. Each person is a “Johannes Thomasius” in his own fashion.

Everything in the drama is presented, therefore, in a completely individual way. Through this, the truth portrayed by the particular figures brings out as clearly as possible the development of the soul of a human being. At the beginning, Thomasius is shown in the physical world, but certain soul-happenings are hinted at that provide a wide basis for such development, particularly an experience at a somewhat earlier time when he deserted a girl who had been lovingly devoted to him. Such things do take place, but this individual happening has a different effect on a man who has resolved

to undertake his own development. There is one deep truth necessary for him who wants to undergo development: self-knowledge cannot be achieved by brooding within oneself but only through diving into the being of others. Through self-knowledge we must learn that we have emerged from the cosmos. Only when we give ourselves up can we change into another Self. First of all, we are transformed into whatever was close to us in life.

When at first Johannes sinks more deeply into himself and then plunges in self-knowledge into another person, into the one to whom he has brought bitter pain, we see this as an example of the experience of oneself within another, a descent into self-knowledge. Theoretically, one can say that if we wish to know the blossom, we must plunge into the blossom, and the best method of acquiring self-knowledge is to plunge again, but in a different way, into happenings we once took part in. As long as we remain in ourselves, we experience only superficially whatever takes place. In contrast to true self-knowledge, what we think of other persons is then mere abstraction.

For Thomasius at first, what other people have lived through becomes a part of him. One of them, Capesius, describes some of his experiences; we can observe that they are rooted in real life. But Thomasius takes in more. He is listening. His listening is singular; later, in Scene

Eight, we will be able to characterize it. It is really as if Thomasius' ordinary Self were not present. Another deeper force appears, as though Thomasius were creeping into the soul of Capesius and were taking part in what is happening from there. That is why it is so absolutely important for Thomasius to be estranged from himself. Tearing the Self out of oneself and entering into another is part and parcel of self-knowledge. It is noteworthy, therefore, that what he has listened to in Scene One, Thomasius says, reveals:

*... A mirrored image of the whole of life,
that showed me clearly to myself.
What is revealed to us out of the spirit
has led me to perceive how many men,
who think themselves a whole, in fact
hear in themselves one single facet only.
In order to unite within myself
all these divergent sides,
I started boldly on the path taught here —
and it has made of me a nothing.*

Why has it made a “nothing” of him? Because through self-knowledge he has plunged into these other persons. Brooding in your own inner self makes you proud, conceited. True self-knowledge leads, first of all, by having to plunge into a strange Self, into suffering. In Scene One Johannes follows each person so strongly that when he listens to Capesius he

becomes aware of the words of Felicia within the other soul. He follows Strader into the loneliness of the cloister, but at first this has the character of something theoretical. He cannot reach as far as he is later led, in Scene Two, through pain. Self-knowledge is deepened by the meditation within his inner Self. What was shown in Scene One is shown changed in Scene Two through self-knowledge intensified from abstraction to a concrete imagination. Those well-known words, which we have heard through the centuries as the motif of the Delphic Oracle, bring about a new life for this man Johannes, though at first it is a life of estrangement from himself.

Johannes enters, as a knower-of-himself, into all the outer phenomena. He finds his life in the air and water, in the rocks and springs, but not in himself. All the words that we can let sound on stage only from outside are actually the words of his meditation. As soon as the curtain rises, we have to confront these words, which would sound louder to anyone through self-knowledge than we can dare to produce on the stage. Thereafter, he who is learning to know himself dives into the other beings and elements and thus learns to know them. Then in a terrible form the same experience he has had earlier appears to him.

It is a deep truth that self-knowledge, when it progresses in the way we have characterized, leads us to see ourselves

quite differently from the way we ever saw ourselves before. It teaches us to perceive our “I” as a strange being.

Man believes his own outer physical sheath to be the closest thing to himself. Nowadays, when he cuts a finger, he is much more connected with the painful finger than when, for instance, a friend hurts him with an unjust opinion. How much more does it hurt a modern person to cut his finger than to hear an unjust opinion! Yet he is only cutting into his bodily sheath. To feel our body as a tool, however, will come about only through self- knowledge.

Whenever a person grasps an object, he can feel his hand to some degree as a tool. This, too, he can learn to feel with one or another part of his brain. The inward feeling of his brain as instrument comes about at a certain level of self-knowledge. Specific places within the brain are localized. If we hammer a nail, we know we are doing it with a tool. We know that we are also using as tool one or another part of the brain. Through the fact that these things are objective and can become separate and strange to us, we come to know our brain as something quite separate from us. Self-knowledge requires this sort of objectivity as regards our body; gradually our outer sheath becomes as objective to us as the ordinary tools we use. Then, as soon as we have made a start at feeling our bodily sheath as separate object, we truly begin to live in the outside world.

Because a person feels only his body, he is not clear about the boundary between the air outside and the air in his lungs. All the same, he will say that it is the same air, outside and inside. So it is with everything, with the blood, with everything that belongs to the body. But what belongs to the body cannot be outside and inside — that is mere illusion. It is only through the fact that we allow the internal bodily nature to become outward that in truth it finds a further life out in the rest of the world and the cosmos.

In the first scene recited today there was an effort to express the pain of feeling estranged from oneself — the pain of feeling estranged because of being outside and within all the other things. Johannes Thomasius' own bodily sheath seems like a person outside himself. But just because of that — that he feels his own body outside — he can see the approach of another body, that of the young girl he once deserted. It comes toward him; he has learned how to speak with the very words of the other being. She says to him, whose Self has widened out to her:

*He brought me bitter sorrow;
I gave him all my trust.
He left me in my grief alone.
He robbed me of the warmth of life
and thrust me deep into cold earth.*

Then guilt, very much alive, rises up in the soul when, plunging our own Self into another and attaching ourselves to the pain of this other being, the pain is spoken out. This is a deepening, an intensifying. Johannes is truly *within* the pain, because he has caused it. He feels himself dissolving into it and then waking up again. What is he actually experiencing?

When we try to put all this together, we will find that the ordinary, normal human being undergoes something similar only in the condition we call kamaloka. The initiate, however, has to experience in this world what the normal person experiences in the spiritual world. Within the physical body he must go through what ordinarily is experienced outside the physical body. All the elements of kamaloka have to be undergone as the elements of initiation. Just as Johannes dives into the soul to whom he has brought such grief, so must the normal human being in kamaloka dive into the souls to which he has brought pain. It is just as if a slap in the face has to come back to him; he has to feel the same pain. The only difference is that the initiate experiences this in the physical body, and other people after death. The one who goes through this here will afterward live otherwise in kamaloka. But even all that one undergoes in kamaloka can be so experienced that one does not become entirely free. It is a most difficult task to become completely free. A man feels as if he were chained to his physical conditions.

In our time one of the most important elements for our development — not yet so much in the Greco-Roman epoch but especially important nowadays — is that the human being must experience how infinitely difficult it is to become free of himself. Therefore, a notable initiation experience is described by Johannes as feeling chained to his own lower nature; his own being seems to be a creature to which he is firmly fettered:

*I feel the chains
that hold me fettered fast to you.
Prometheus was not chained so fast
upon the cliffs of Caucasus
as I am chained to you.*

This belongs to self-knowledge; it is a secret of self-knowledge. We should try to understand it correctly.

A question about this secret could be phrased like this: have we in some way become better human beings by becoming earth dwellers, by entering into our physical sheaths, or would we be better by remaining in our inner natures and throwing off those sheaths? Superficial people, taking a look at life in the spirit, may well ask: why ever do we have to plunge down into a physical body? It would be much easier to stay up there and not get into the whole miserable business of earthly existence.

For what reason have the wise powers of destiny thrust us down here? Perhaps it helps our feelings a little to say that for millions and millions of years the divine, spiritual powers have worked on the physical body. Because of this, we should make more out of ourselves than we have the strength to do. Our inner forces are not enough. We cannot yet be what the gods have intended for us if we wish to be only what is in our inner nature, if our outer sheaths do not work some corrections in us. Life shows us that here on earth man is put into his physical sheaths and that these have been prepared for him by the beings of three world epochs. Man has now to develop his inner nature. Between birth and death, he is bad; in Devachan he is a better creature, taken up by divine, spiritual beings who shower him with their own forces. Later on, in the Vulcan epoch, he will be a perfect being. Now on the earth he is a being who gives way to this or that desire. Our hearts, for one thing, are created with such wisdom that they can hold out for decades against the excesses we indulge in, such as drinking coffee. What man can be today through his own will is the way he travels through kamaloka. There he has to learn what he can be through his own will, and that is certainly nothing very good. Whenever man is asked to describe himself, he cannot use the adjective “beautiful.” He has to describe himself as Johannes does in Scene Two:

Yet how do I behold myself!

*My human form is lost;
as raging dragon I must see myself,
begot of lust and greed.
I clearly sense
how an illusion's cloud
has hid from me till now
my own appalling form.*

Our inner nature stretches flexibly within our bodily sheaths and is hidden from us. When we approach initiation, we learn really to see ourselves as a kind of raging dragon. Therefore, these words are drawn up out of the deepest perception; they are words of self-knowledge, not of self-brooding:

*It is myself.
So knowledge chains to you, pernicious monster,
me myself, pernicious monster.*

At bottom, they are both the same, one the subject, the other the object.

I sought to flee from you.

This flight, however, merely leads the human being directly to himself.

But then the crowd turns up, the crowd we find ourselves in when we really look into ourselves. We find ourselves to be a

collection of lusts and passions we had not noticed earlier, because each time we wanted to look into ourselves our eyes were distracted to the world outside. Indeed, compared to what we would have seen inside, the world outside is wonderfully beautiful. Out there, in the illusion, in the maya of life, we stop looking at ourselves inwardly. When people around us, however, begin to talk all kinds of stupidity and we cannot stand it, we escape to where we can be alone. This is quite important at some levels of development. We can and should collect ourselves; it is a good means of self-knowledge. But it can happen that, coming into a crowd of people, we can no longer be alone; those others appear, either within us or outside us, no matter; they do not allow us to be alone. Then comes the experience we must have: solitude actually brings forth the worst kind of fellowship.

*For me, man's final refuge,
for me, my solitude is lost.*

Those are genuine experiences. Do not let the strength, the intensity, of the happenings trouble you. You do not have to believe that such strength and intensity as described must necessarily lead to anxiety or fear. It should not prevent anyone from also plunging into these waters. No one will experience all this as swiftly or with such vehemence as Johannes does; it had to come about for him in this way for a definite purpose, even prematurely, too. A normal self-

development proceeds differently. Therefore, what occurs in Johannes so tumultuously must be understood as an individual happening. Because he is this particular individual, who has suffered a kind of shipwreck, everything he undergoes takes place much more tempestuously than it otherwise would. He is confronted by the laws of self-development in such a way that they throw him completely off balance. As for us, one thing should be awakened by this description of Johannes, that is, the perception that true self-knowledge has nothing to do with trite phrases, that true self-knowledge inevitably leads us into pain and sorrow.

Things that once were a source of delight can assume a different face when they appear in the realm of self-knowledge. We can long for solitude, no doubt, when we have already found self-knowledge. But in certain moments of self-development it is solitude we have lost when we look for it as we did earlier, in moments when we flow out into the objective world, when in loneliness we have to suffer the sharpest pain.

Learning to perceive in the right way this outpouring of the Self into other beings will help us feel what has been put into the Mystery Drama: a certain artistic element has been created in which everything is spiritually realistic. One who thinks realistically — a genuine, artistic, sensitive realist — undergoes at unrealistic performances a certain amount of suffering. Even what at a certain level can provide great

satisfaction is at another level a source of pain. This is due to the path of self- development. A play by Shakespeare, for instance, an immense achievement in the physical world, can be an occasion for artistic pleasure. But a certain moment of development can arrive when we are no longer satisfied by Shakespeare because we seem inwardly torn to pieces. We go from one scene to the next but no longer see the necessity that has ordered one scene to follow another. We begin to find it unnatural that a scene follows the one preceding it. Why unnatural? Because nothing holds two scenes together except the dramatist Shakespeare and his audience. His scenes follow the abstract principle of cause and effect but not a concrete reality. It is characteristic of Shakespeare's drama that nothing of underlying karma is hinted at; this would tie the scenes together more closely.

The Rosicrucian drama grew into a realistic, spiritually realistic one. It makes huge demands on Johannes Thomasius, who is constantly on stage without taking part actively or showing a single important dramatic characteristic. He is the one in whose soul everything takes place, and what is described is the development of that soul, the real experience of the soul's development.

Johannes' soul spins one scene realistically out of the one before it. Through this we see that *realistic* and *spiritual* do not contradict each other. *Materialistic* and *spiritual* things do not

need each other, and they can contradict each other. But *realistic* and *spiritual* are not opposites; it is quite possible for spiritual realism to be admired even by a materialistic person. In regard to artistic principles, the plays of Shakespeare can be thought of as realistic. You will understand, however, how far the art that goes hand in hand with a science of the spirit must finally lead. For the one who finds his Self out in the cosmos, the whole cosmos becomes an ego being. We cannot bear then anything coming toward us that is *not* related to the ego being. Art will gradually learn something in this direction; it will come to the ego principle, because the Christ has brought us our ego for the first time. In the most various realms will this ego be alive.

In still another way can the specific human entity be shown within the soul and also divided into its various components outside. If someone asked which person represents Atma, which one Buddhi, which one Manas? ... if someone in the audience could exclaim, "O yes, that figure on the stage is the personification of Manas!" ... it would be a horrible kind of art, a dreadful kind of art. It is a bad theosophical habit to try to explain everything like this. One would like to say, "Poor thing!" of a work of art that has to be "explained." If it were to be attempted with Shakespeare's plays, it would indeed be absurd and downright wrong.

These habits are the childhood diseases of the

theosophical movement. They will gradually be cured. But for once at least, it is necessary to point them out. It might even happen that someone tries to look for the nine members of the human organization in the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven!

On the other hand, it is correct to some extent to say that the united elements of human nature can be assigned to different characters. One person has this soul coloring, a second person another; we can see characters on the stage who present different sides of the whole unified human being. The people we encounter in the world usually present one or another particular trait. As we develop from incarnation to incarnation, we gradually become a whole. To show this underlying fact on the stage, our whole life has somehow to be separated into parts.

In this Rosicrucian Mystery, we will find that everything that Maria is supposed to be is dispersed among the other figures who are around her as companions. They form with her what might be called an “egoity.” We find special characteristics of the sentient soul in Philia, of the intellectual soul in Astrid, of the consciousness soul in Luna. It was for this reason that their names were chosen. The names of all the characters and beings were given according to their natures. In Devachan, Scene Seven, particularly, where everything is spirit, not only the words but also the placing of the words is meant to characterize the three figures of Philia, Astrid, and

Luna in their exact relationships. The speeches at the beginning of Scene Seven are a better description of sentient soul, intellectual soul, and consciousness soul than any number of words otherwise could achieve. Here one can really demonstrate what each soul is. One can show in an artistic form the relationship of the three souls by means of the levels at which the figures stand. In the human being they flow into one another. Separated from each other, they show themselves clearly: Philia as she places herself in the cosmos; Astrid as she relates herself to the elements; Luna as she directs herself into free deed and self-knowledge. Because they show themselves so clearly in the Devachan scene, everything in it is alchemy in the purest sense of the word; all of alchemy is there, if one can gradually discover it.

Not only as abstract content is alchemy in the scene but in the weaving essence of the words. Therefore, you should listen not merely to what is said, nor indeed only to what each single character speaks, but particularly to how the soul forces speak in relation to one another. The sentient soul pushes itself into the astral body; we can perceive weaving astrality there. The intellectual soul slips itself into the etheric body; there we perceive weaving ether being. We can observe how the consciousness soul pours itself with inner firmness into the physical body. Soul endeavor that has an effect like light is contained in Philia's words. In Astrid is contained what brings about the etheric-objective ability to

confront the very truth of things. Inner resolve connected at first with the firmness of the physical body is given in Luna. We must begin to be sensitive to all this. Let us listen to the soul forces in Scene Seven:

Philia
(*Sentient soul*)

I will imbue myself
with clearest essence of the light
from worldwide spaces.
I will breathe in sound-substance,
life-bestowing,
from far ethereal regions,
that you, beloved sister, with your
work
may reach your goal.

Astrid
(*Intellectual soul*)

And I will weave
into the radiant light
the clouding darkness.
I will condense
the life of sound,
that glistening it may ring
and ringing it may glisten,
that you, beloved sister,
may guide the rays of soul.

Luna
(*Consciousness
soul*)

I will enwarm soul-substance
and will make firm life-ether.
They shall condense themselves,
they shall perceive themselves,
and in themselves residing
guard their creative forces,
that you, beloved sister,
within the seeking soul

may quicken certainty of
knowledge.

I would like to draw your attention to the words of Philia,

*Dass dir, geliebte Schwester,
Das Werk gelingen kann.
(that you, beloved sister, with your work may reach your goal.)*

and to those of Astrid that carry the connotation of
something heavier, more compact,

Dass du, geliebte Schwester ...

“*Dass dir*,” “*Dass du*,” and then we have the “*Du*” again in
Luna’s speech woven together with the still heavier, weighty

*Der suchenden Menschenseele
(within the seeking soul)*

There the “u” is woven into its neighboring consonants, so
that it can take on a still firmer compactness. [In the English
translation of *The Portal of Initiation* these three sound
distinctions could not be kept, except in the word “soul” at the
end of Luna’s speech, in which *the (spoken) diphthong*
possesses a nuance of “u.”]

These are the things that one can actually characterize.

Please remember, it all depends on the “How.” Let us compare the words Philia speaks next:

*I will entreat the spirits of the worlds
that they, with light of being,
enchant soul feeling,
that they, with tone of words,
charm spirit hearing,*

with the rather different ones of Astrid:

*I will guide streams of love
that fill the world with warmth,
into the heart
of him, the consecrated one.*

Just here, where these words are spoken, the inner weaving essence of the world of Devachan has been achieved.

I am mentioning all this, because the scenes should make it clear that when self-knowledge begins to unfold into the outer cosmic weaving and being, we have to give up everything that is one-sided. We have to learn, too, to be aware — as we otherwise do only in a quite superficial, pedestrian way — of what is at hand at every point of existence. We become inflexible creatures, we human beings, when we stay rooted to only *one* spot in space, believing that our words can

express the truth. But words, limited as they are to physical sound, are not what best will communicate truth. I would like to put it like this: we have to become sensitive to the voice itself. Anything as important as Johannes Thomasius' path to self-knowledge can be rightfully experienced — it depends on this — only when he struggles courageously for that self-knowledge and holds on to it.

When self-knowledge has crushed us, the next stage is to begin to draw into ourselves, to harbor inwardly what was our outer experience, learning how closely the cosmos is related to ourselves (for this comes to us after we understand the nature of the beings around us); now we must attempt courageously to live with our understanding. It is only one half of the matter to dive down like Johannes into a being to whom we have brought sorrow and have thrust into cold earth. For now, we have begun to feel differently. We summon up our courage to make amends for the pain we have caused. Now we can dive into this new life and speak out of our own nature differently. This is what confronts us in Scene Nine. In Scene Two the young girl cried out to Johannes:

*He brought me bitter sorrow;
I gave him all my trust.
He left me in my grief alone.
He robbed me of the warmth of life
and thrust me deep into cold earth.*

In Scene Nine, however, after Johannes has undergone what every path to self-knowledge demands, the same being calls to him:

*O you must find me once again
and ease my suffering.*

This is the other side of the coin: first the devastation and despair, and now the return to equilibrium. The being calls to him:

O you must find me once again ...

It could not have been described otherwise, this lifting into perception of the world, this replenishing of himself with life experience. True self-knowledge through perception of the cosmos could only have been described with the words Johannes uses when he comes to himself. It has begun, of course, in Scene Two:

*For many years these words
of weighty meaning I have heard.*

Then — after he has dived down into deep earth, after he has united himself with it — the power is born in his soul to let the words arise that express the essence of Scene Nine:

For three years now I've sought

*for power of soul, with wings of courage,
to give these words their truth.*

*Through them a man who frees himself can conquer
and, conquering himself, can find his freedom.*

The words, “O man, unfold your being!” are in direct contrast to the words of Scene Two, “O man, know thou thyself!” There appears to us once and again the very same scene. It leads the first time downward to:

*The world and my own nature
are living in the words:
O man, know thou thyself!*

Then afterward it is the opposite; it has changed. The scene characterizes soul development.

You have also heard the devastating words:

*Maria, are you then aware
through what my soul has fought its way?*

.

*For me, man's final refuge,
for me, my solitude is lost.*

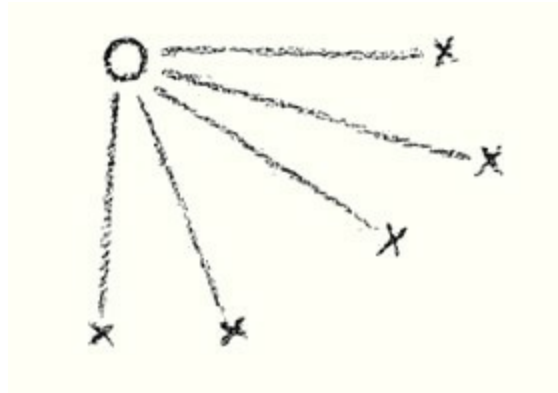
But Scene Nine shows how the being of the girl attains first hope and then security. That is the turning point. It cannot be constructed haphazardly; it is actual experience. Through it

we can sense how self-knowledge in a soul like Johannes Thomasius can ascend into a self- unfolding. We should perceive, too, how his experience is distributed among many single persons in whom one characteristic has been formed in each incarnation.

At the end of the drama a whole community stands there in the Sun Temple, like a tableau, and the many together are a single person. The various characteristics of a human being are distributed among them all; essentially there is one person there. A pedant might like to object. “Are there not too many different members of the whole? Surely nine or twelve would be the correct number!” But reality does not always work in such a way as to be in complete agreement with theory. This way it corresponds more nearly with the truth than if we had all the single constituents of man’s being marching up in military rank and file.

Let us now put ourselves into the Sun Temple. There are various persons standing in the places they belong to karmically, just as their karmas have brought them together in life. But when we think of Johannes here in the middle and think, too, that all the other characters are mirrored in his soul, each character as one of his soul qualities — what is happening there if we can accept it as reality?

Johannes Thomasius



Karma has actually brought these persons together as in a focal point. Nothing is without intention, plan, or reason; what the single individualities have done not only has meaning for each one himself, but each is also a soul experience for Johannes Thomasius. Everything is happening twice: once in the macrocosm, a second time in the microcosm, in the soul of Johannes. This is his initiation. Just as Maria, for example, has a special connection with him, so, too, there is an important part of his soul with a similar connection to another part of his soul. Those are absolute correspondences, embodied in the drama uncompromisingly. What one sees as outer stage- happening is, in Johannes, an inner happening in his development. There has to come about what the Hierophant has described in Scene Three:

*There forms itself within this circle
a knot out of the threads
which karma spins in world becoming.*

It has already formed itself, and this truly entangled knot

shows what everything is leading toward. There is absolute reality as to how karma spins its threads; it is not an aimless spinning. We experience the knot as the initiation event in Johannes' soul, and the whole scene shows us a certain individuality actually standing above the others, that is, the Hierophant, who is directing, who is guiding the threads. We need only think of the Hierophant's relationship to Maria.

But it is just there that we can realize how self-knowledge can illuminate what happens to Maria in Scene Three. It is not at all pleasant, this emerging out of the Self. It is a thoroughly real experience, a forsaking of the human sheaths by our inner power; the sheaths left behind become then a battleground for inferior powers. When Maria sends down a ray of love to the Hierophant, it can only be portrayed in this way: down below, the physical body, taken over by the power of the adversary, speaks out the antithesis of what is happening above. From above a ray of love streams down, and below arises a curse. Those are the contrasting scenes: Scene Seven in

Devachan, where Maria describes what she has actually brought about, and Scene Three, where, from the deserted body, the curses of the demonic forces are directed toward the Hierophant. Those are the two corresponding scenes. They complete each other. If they had had to be "constructed" theoretically from the beginning, the end result would have

been incredibly poor.

I therefore have based today's lecture on one aspect of this Mystery Drama, and I should like to extend this to include certain special characteristics that underlie initiation.

Although it has been necessary to bring out rather sharply what has just been shown as the actual events of initiation, it should not let you lose courage or resolve in your own striving toward the spiritual world. The description of dangers was aimed at strengthening a person against powerful forces. The dangers are there; pain and sorrow are the prospect. It would be a poor sort of effort if we proposed to rise into higher worlds in the most convenient way. Striving to reach the spiritual worlds cannot yet be as convenient as rolling over the miles in a modern train, one of those many conveniences our materialistic culture has put into our everyday lives. What has been described should not make us timid; to a certain extent the very encounter with the dangers of initiation should steel our courage.

Johannes Thomasius' disposition made him unable to continue painting; this grew into pain, and the pain grew into perception. So, it is that everything that arouses pain and sorrow will transform itself into perception. But we have to search earnestly for this path, and our search will be possible only when we realize that the truths of spiritual science are

not at all simple. They are such profound truths for our whole life that no one will ever understand them perfectly. It is just the single example in actual life that helps us to understand the world. One can speak about the conditions of a spiritual development much more exactly when one describes the development of Johannes, rather than when one describes the development of human beings in general. In the book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, [Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, Anthroposophic Press, Inc., Spring Valley, NY, reprinted 1983.] the development that every human being can undertake is described, simply the concrete possibility as such. When we portray Johannes Thomasius, we look at a single individuality. But therewith we lose the opportunity of describing such development in a general way.

I hope you will be induced to say that I have not yet spoken out the essential truth of the matter. For we have described two extremes and must find the various gradations between them. I can give only a few suggestive ideas, which should then begin to live in your hearts and souls.

When I gave you some indications about the Gospel of St. Matthew, [Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. Matthew*, Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1965.] I asked you not to try to remember the very words but to try — when you go out into life — to look into your heart and soul to discover what the

words have *become*. Read not only the printed lectures, but read also in a truly earnest way your own soul.

For this to happen, however, something must have been given from outside, something has first to enter into us; otherwise, there could be self-deception of the soul. If you can begin to read in your soul, you will notice that what comes to you from outside re-echoes quite differently within. A true anthroposophical effort would be first of all to understand what is said in as many different ways as there are listeners.

No one speaking about spiritual science could wish to be understood in only one sense. He would like to be understood in as many ways as there are souls present to understand him. Anthroposophy can tolerate this. One thing is needed, however, and this is not an incidental remark; one thing is needed: every single kind of understanding should be correct and true. Each one may be individual, but it must be true. Sometimes it seems that the uniqueness of the interpretation lies in being just the opposite of what has been said.

When then we speak of self-knowledge, we should realize how much more useful it is to come to it by looking for mistakes within ourselves and for the truth outside.

It shall not be said, "Search within yourself for the truth!" Indeed, truth is to be found outside ourselves. We will find it poured out over the world. Through self-knowledge we must

become free of ourselves and undergo those various gradations of soul experience. Loneliness can become a horrid companion.

We can also perceive our terrible weakness when we sense with our feelings the greatness of the cosmos out of which we have been born. But then through this we take courage. And we can make ourselves courageous enough to experience what we perceive.

Then we will finally discover that, after the loss of all the certainty we had in life, there will blossom for us the first and last certainty of life, the confidence that finding ourselves in the cosmos allows us to conquer and find ourselves anew.

*O man, experience the world within yourself!
For then — in striding forth beyond your self —
You will find yourself at last
Within you own true Self.*

Let us feel these words as genuine experience. They will gradually become for us steps in our development.

On the Mystery Plays:

Lecture 3

Symbolism and Phantasy in Relation to the Mystery Drama, The Soul's Probation

Let us consider today the second Mystery Drama, *The Soul's Probation*. You will have noticed that in our various stage performances, and especially in this play, an attempt was made to bring the dramatic happenings into connection with our anthroposophical world view. In this play in particular, we wanted to present on the stage in a very real way the idea of reincarnation and its effect on the human soul. I need not say that the incidents in *The Soul's Probation* are not simply thought out; they fully correspond with observations of esoteric study in certain ways, so that the scenes are completely realistic in a definite sense of the word. We can discuss this evening first of all the idea that a kind of transition had to be created, leading from Capesius' normal life to his plunge into a former life, into the time when he lived through his previous incarnation.

I have often asked myself since *The Soul's Probation* was written, what enabled Capesius to build a bridge from his life in a world where he had known — though certainly with a genial spirit — only what is given by external sense perception with a world view bound to the instrument of the brain; how it was, I say, that a bridge could be created from such a world to the one into which he then plunged, which

could only be revealed through occult sense organs. I have often asked myself why the fairy tale, with the three figures at the rock spring (Scene Five) had to be the bridge for Capesius. Of course, it was not because of some clever idea or some deliberate decision that the fairy tale was placed just at this point, but simply because imagination brought it about. One could even ask afterward why such a fairy tale is necessary. In connection, then, with *The Soul's Probation* there came to me certain enlightening points of view about the poetry of fairy tales in general and about poetry in relation to anthroposophy.

A person could well put into practical use in his life the facts implicit in the division of the soul into sentient, intellectual, and consciousness souls, but when he does, riddles of perception will loom up in a simply elemental- emotional way with regard to his place in, and relationship to, the world. These riddles do not allow themselves to be spoken out in our ordinary language, with our ordinary concepts, for the simple reason that we are living today in too intellectual a time to bring to expression in words, or through what is possible in words, the subtle distinctions between the three members of our soul.

It is better to choose a method that will allow the soul's relationship to the world to seem diversified and yet quite definite and clear. What moves through the whole of *The Soul's Probation* as the connecting link between the events

themselves and what is significant in the three figures, Philia, Astrid, and Luna, had to be expressed in delicate outlines; yet this had to call up strong enough soul responses to bring out clearly man's relationship to the world around him. It could be presented in no other way than to show how the telling of the fairy tale about the three women awoke in Capesius' soul, as a definite preparation for his development, the strong urge to descend into those worlds that only now are beginning to be perceived again by human beings as real.

There will now be a recital of the fairy tale, so that we can reflect upon it afterward.

*

(Scene Five: Tale of the Rockspring Wonder)

Once upon a time there was a boy
who lived — the only child of a poor forester —
within a woodland solitude. He knew
besides his parents hardly any other people.
His build was slender,
his skin almost transparent.
One could look long into his eyes:
they treasured deepest spirit wonders.
And though indeed few people entered
the circle of his life,
he never was in need of friends.

When in the nearby mountains
the golden sunlight glowed and glimmered,
the boy's rapt, musing eye drew forth
the spirit gold into his soul
until his heart resembled
the morning brightness of the sun. —
But when through darkening clouds
the morning sunrays could not pierce
and dreariness hung over mountain heights,
the boy's eye, too, grew dull;
a mood of sadness filled his heart. —
The spirit weaving of his narrow world
took hold of him so fully
that it was no less strange to him
than were his body and his limbs.
The trees and flowers of the woods
were all his friends:
there spoke to him from crown and calyx
and from the lofty tree-tops spirit beings
and what they whispered, he could understand. —
Such wondrous things of worlds unknown
unlocked themselves before the boy
whenever his soul conversed
with what most people would regard as lifeless.
At evening his anxious parents
from time to time missed their beloved child. —
The boy was at a spot nearby

where from the rocks a spring burst forth,
and waterdrops, dispersing thousandfold,
were scattered over stones.

When moonlight's silver glance,
in sparkling colours' sorcery,
was mirrored in the water's misty spray,
the boy could sit for hours on end
beside the rock-born spring.

And figures, formed by spirit-magic,
arose before his youthful vision
in rushing water and in moonlight's glimmer.

They grew into three women's forms
who told him of those things
toward which his soul's desire was turned. —

And when upon a gentle summer night
the boy was sitting at the spring again,
one woman of the three caught up a myriad of drops
out of the glittering spray
and gave them to the second woman.

She fashioned from the tiny drops
a chalice with a silver gleam
and passed it to the third.

She filled it with the moonlight's silver rays
and gave it to the boy,
who had beheld all this
with youthful inner sight. —

Now in the night

which followed this event,
he dreamed that he was robbed
by a fierce dragon of the chalice.
After this night the boy beheld
just three times more the wonder of the spring.
Henceforth the women came no more
although the boy sat musing
beside the rock-born spring in moonlight's silver sheen.
And when three hundred sixty weeks
had run their course three times,
the boy had long become a man
and left his parents' home and forest country
to live in a strange city.
One evening, tired from the day's hard toil,
he pondered on what life had still in store for him,
and suddenly he felt himself a boy,
caught up and carried to his rock-born spring.
Again he could behold the water-women
and this time heard them speak.
The first one said to him:

Remember me at any time
you feel alone in life.
I lure man's eye of soul
to starry spaces and ethereal realms.
And whosoever wills to feel me,
I offer him the draught of hope in life

out of my wonder goblet. —

And then the second spoke:

Do not forget me at the times
when courage in your life is threatened.
I lead man's yearning heart
to depths of soul and up to spirit heights.
And whosoever seeks his strength from me,
for him I forge the steel of faith in life,
shaped by my wonder hammer. —

The third one could be heard:

To me lift up your eye of spirit
when your life's riddles overwhelm you.
I spin the threads of thought that lead
through labyrinths of life and the abyss of soul.
And whosoever harbours trust in me,
for him I weave the living rays of love
upon my wonder loom. —

Thus it befell the man,
and in the night that followed this
he dreamed a dream:
a savage dragon prowled
in circles round about him, —
and yet could not come near him.

He was protected from that dragon by
the beings he had seen beside the rock-born spring
and who with him had left his home
for this far-distant place.

It seems to me that the world of fairy tales can quite rightfully be placed between the external world and everything that in past times man, with his early clairvoyance, could see in the spiritual world; with everything, too, that he can still behold today if, by chance, either through certain abnormal propensities or through a trained clairvoyance, he can raise himself to the spiritual world. Between the world of spirit and the world of outer reality, of intelligence, of the senses, it is the world of the fairy tale that is the most fitting connecting link. It would seem necessary to find an explanation for this position of the fairy tale and the fairy tale mood between these other two worlds.

It is extraordinarily difficult to create the bridge between these spheres, but I realized that a fairy tale itself could construct it. Better than all the theoretical explanations, a simple fairy tale really seems to build this bridge, a tale that one could tell something like this:

Once upon a time there was a poor boy who owned nothing but a clever cat. The cat helped him win great riches by persuading the King that her master possessed an estate so

huge, so remarkably beautiful that it would amaze even the King himself. The clever cat brought it about that the King set forth and traveled through several astonishing parts of the country. Everywhere he went, he heard — thanks to the cat's trickery — that all the great fields and strange buildings belonged to the poor boy.

Finally, the King arrived at a magnificent castle, but he came a bit late (as often happens in fairy tales), for it was just the time when the Giant Troll, who was the actual owner of this wonderful place, was returning home from his wanderings over the earth, intending to enter his castle.

The King was inside looking at all its wonders, and so the clever cat stretched herself out in front of the entrance door, for the King must not suspect that everything belonged to the Giant Troll. It was just before dawn that the Giant arrived home and the cat began to tell him a long tale, holding him there at the front door to listen to it. She rattled along about a peasant plowing his field, putting on manure, digging it in, going after the seed he wanted to use, and finally sowing the field. In short, she told him such an endless tale that dawn came and the sun began to rise. The wily cat told the Giant to turn around and look at the Golden Maid of the East whom he surely had never seen before. But when he turned to look, the Giant Troll burst into pieces, for that is what happens to giants and is a law they have to conform to: they may not look at the

rising sun. Therefore, through the cat's delaying the Giant, the poor boy actually came into possession of the wonderful palace. The clever cat at first had given her master only hope, but finally, with her tricks, also the great castle and the vast estate.

One can say that this simple little tale is extremely significant for its explanation of fairy tale style today. It is really so that when we look at men and women in their earthly development, we can see what most of them are — those who have developed on earth in the various incarnations they have lived through and are now incarnated. Each one is a “poor boy.” Yes, in comparison to earlier historical epochs, today we are fundamentally “poor boys” who possess nothing but a clever cat. We do, however, it's true, have a clever cat, which is our intelligence, our intellect. Everything the human being has acquired through his senses, whatever he now possesses of the outer world through the intelligence limited to the brain, is absolute poverty in comparison to the whole cosmic world and to what man experienced in the ancient Saturn, Sun, and Moon epochs. All of us are basically “poor boys,” possessing only our intelligence, something that can exert itself a little in order to promise us some imaginary property. In short, our modern situation is like the boy with the clever cat.

Actually, though, we are not altogether the “poor boy”; that

is only in relation to our consciousness. Our ego is rooted in the secret depths of our soul life, and these secret depths are connected with endless worlds and endless cosmic happenings, all of which affect our lives and play into them. But each of us who today has become a “poor boy” knows nothing more of this splendor; we can at best, through the cat, through philosophy, explain the meaning and importance of what we see with our eyes or take in with our other senses. When a modern person wants somehow to speak about anything beyond the sense world, or if he wishes to create something that reaches beyond the sense world, he does it, and has been doing it for several hundred years, by means of art and poetry.

Our modern age, which in many ways is a peculiarly transitional one, points up strongly how men and women fail to escape the mood of being “poor boys,” even when they can produce poetry and art in the sense world. For in our time (1911), there is a kind of disbelief in trying to aim toward anything higher in art than naturalism, the purely external mirroring of outer reality. Who can deny that often today when we look at the glittering art and literature expressing the world of reality, we can hear a melancholy sigh, “Oh, it’s only delusion; there’s no truth in any of it.” Such a mood is all too common in our time. The King of the fairy tale, who lives in each one of us and has his origin in the spiritual world, definitely needs to be persuaded by the clever cat — by the

intelligence given to man — that everything growing out of the imagination and awakened by art is truly a genuine human possession. Man is persuaded at first by the King within him but only for a certain length of time. At some point, and today we are living just at the beginning of such a time, it is necessary for human beings to find once more the entrance to the spiritual, divine world. It is today necessary for human beings, and everywhere we can feel an urgency in them, to rise again toward the spheres of the spiritual world.

There has first, however, to be some sort of bridge, and the easiest of all transitions would be a thoughtful activating of the fairy tale mood. The mood of the fairy tale, even in a quite superficial sense, is truly the means to prepare human souls, such as they are today, for the experience of what can shine into them from higher, supersensible worlds. The simple fairy tale, approaching modestly with no pretension of copying everyday reality but leaping grandly over all its laws, provides a preparation in human souls for once more accepting the divine, spiritual worlds. A rough faith in the divine worlds was possible in earlier times because of man's more primitive constitution, which gave him a certain kind of clairvoyance. But in the face of reality today, this kind of faith has to burst into pieces just as the Giant Troll did. Only through clever cat questions and cat tales, spun about everyday reality, can we hold him back. Certainly, we can spin those endless tales of the clever cat to show how here and there external reality is

forced toward a spiritual explanation.

In broad philosophical terms, one can spin out a long-winded answer to this or that question only by referring to the spiritual world. One still keeps all this as a kind of memento from earlier times; with it one can succeed in detaining the Giant for a short time. What is with us from earlier times, however, cannot hold its own against the clear language of reality. It will burst into pieces just as the Giant Troll burst, on looking at the rising sun. But one has to recognize this mood of the bursting Giant. It is something that has a relationship to the psychology of the fairy tale. Because I find it impossible to describe such things theoretically, I can get at this psychology only through observing the nature of the human soul. Let me say the following about it.

Think for a moment how there might appear livingly, imaginatively, before someone's soul what we recently described in the lectures about pneumatosophy, [Rudolf Steiner, *The Wisdom of Man, of the Soul, and of the Spirit*, Anthroposophic Press, Inc., Spring Valley, NY, 1971.] depicting briefly some details of the spiritual world. In these anthroposophical circles, we certainly speak a good deal about the spiritual world. Before a person's soul, it should come at first as a living imagination. There would be little explicit description, however, if you intended only to describe what urges itself forward toward the soul, even toward the

clairvoyant soul. A queer sort of disharmony comes about when one mixes such truths as those about ancient Saturn, Sun, and Moon conditions, as described in our last three anthroposophical meetings, [Rudolf Steiner, *Inner Realities of Evolution*, Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1953.] into the dismal, ghostlike thoughts of modern times. Over against those things raised up before the soul, one is aware of man's narrow limits. Those secrets of divine worlds have to be grasped, it would seem, by something in us resembling a troll. A swollen, troll-like giant is what one becomes when trying to catch hold of the pictures of the spiritual world. Before the rising sun, then, one has voluntarily to let the pictures burst in a certain way in order for them to be in accord with the mood of modern times. But you can hold something back; you can hold back just what the "poor boy" held back. For our immediate, present-day soul to be left in possession of something, you need the transformation, the matter-of-fact transformation, of the gigantic content of the world of the imagination into the subtlety of the fairy tale mood. Then the human soul will truly feel like the King who has been guided to look at what the soul, this "poor boy" soul, actually does not possess. Nevertheless, it does come into possession of riches when the gigantic Troll bursts into pieces, when one sacrifices the imaginative world in the face of external reality and draws it into the palace that one's phantasy is able to erect.

In former times, the phantasy of the "poor boy" was

nourished by the world of the imagination, but in view of today's soul development this is no longer possible. If, however, we first of all give up the whole world of the imagination and press the whole thing into the subtle mood of the fairy tale, which does not rely on everyday reality, something can remain to us in the fairy tale phantasy that is deep, deep truth. In other words, the "poor boy," who has nothing but his cat, the clever intellect, finds in the fairy tale mood just what he needs in modern times to educate his soul to enter the spiritual world in a new way.

It therefore seems to me from this point of view to be psychologically right that Capesius, educated so completely in the modern world of ideas, though certainly with quite a spiritual regard for this world, should come to the realm of the fairy tale as something new that will open for him a genuine relationship to the occult world. So there had to be something like a fairy tale written into the scene to form a bridge for Capesius between the world of external reality and the world into which he was to plunge, beholding himself in an earlier incarnation.

What has just been described as a purely personal remark about the reason I had for putting the fairy tale at this very place in the drama coincides with what we can call the history of how fairy tales arose in mankind's development. It agrees wonderfully with the way that fairy tales appeared in human

lives. Looking back into earlier epochs of human development, we will find in every prehistoric folk a certain primitive kind of clairvoyance, a capacity to look into the spiritual world. Therefore, we must not only distinguish the two alternating conditions of waking and sleeping in those early times, with a chaotic transition of dream as well, but we must assume in these ancient people a transition between waking and sleeping that was not merely a dream; on the contrary, it was the possibility of looking into reality, living with a spiritual existence. A modern man, awake, is in the world with his consciousness, but only with his sentient consciousness and with his intelligence. He has become as poor as the boy who had nothing but a clever cat. He can also be in the spiritual world in the night, but then he is asleep and is not conscious of it. Between these two conditions, early man had still a third, which conjured something like magnificent pictures before his soul. He lived then in a real world, one that a clairvoyant who has attained the art of clairvoyance also experiences as a world of reality, but not dreamlike or chaotic. Still, ancient man possessed it to such a degree that he could encompass his imaginations with conscious clarity. He lived in these three different conditions. Then, when he felt his soul widening out into the spiritual cosmos, finding its connection with spiritual beings of another kind close to the hierarchies, close to the spiritual beings living in the elements, in earth, water, air, and fire, when he felt his whole being widening out from the narrow limits of his

existence, it must have been for him, in these in-between conditions, like the Giant who nevertheless burst into pieces when the sun rose and he had to wake up.

These descriptions are not at all unrealistic. Because today one no longer feels the full weight of words, you might think the words “burst into pieces” are put there more or less carelessly, just as a word often is merely added to another. But the bursting into pieces actually describes a specific fact. There came to the ancient human being, after he had felt his soul growing out into the entire universe and then, with the coming of the Golden Maid of the Morning, had had to adapt his eyes to everyday reality, there came to him the everyday reality like a painful blow thrusting away what he had just seen. The words really describe the fact.

But within us there is a genuine King, which is a strong and effective part of our human nature; he would never let himself be prevented from carrying something into our world of ordinary reality out of that world in which the soul has its roots. What is thus carried into our everyday world is the projection or reflection of experience; it is the world of phantasy, a real phantasy, not the fantastic, which simply throws together a few of the rags and tatters of life, but it is true phantasy, which lives deep in the soul and which can be urged out of there into every phase of creating. Naturalistic phantasy goes in the opposite direction from genuine

phantasy. Naturalistic phantasy picks up a motif here and a motif there, seeks the patterns for every kind of art from everyday reality and stitches these rags of reality together like patchwork. This is the one and only method in periods of decadent art.

With the kind of phantasy that is the reflection of true imagination, there is something at work of unspecified form, not this shape nor that, and not yet aware of what the outer forms will be that it wants to create. It feels urged on by the material itself to create from within outward. There will then appear, like a darkening of the light-process, what inclines itself in devotion to external reality as image-rich, creatively structured art. It is exactly the opposite process from the one so often observed in today's art work. From an inner center outward everything moves toward this true phantasy, which stands behind our sense reality as a spiritual fact, an imaginative fact. What comes about is phantasy-reality, something that can grow and develop lawfully out of divine, spiritual worlds into our own reality, the lawful possession, one can say, of the poor lad — modern man — limited as he is to the poverty of the outer sense world.

Of all the forms of literature the fairy tale is certainly least bound to outer reality. If we look at sagas, myths, and legends, we will find features in all of them that follow only supersensible laws, but these are actually immersed in the

laws of external reality as they leave the spiritual and go into the outside world just as the source material, historical or history-related, is connected to a historical figure. Only the fairy tale does not allow itself to be manipulated around real figures; it stays quite free of them. It can use everything it finds of ordinary reality and has always used it. Therefore, it is the fairy tale that is the purest child of ancient, primitive clairvoyance; it is a sort of return payment for that early clairvoyance. Let old Sober-sides, the pedant who never gets beyond his academic point of view, fail to perceive this. It doesn't matter; he needn't perceive it. The simple fact is that for every truth he hears, he asks, "Does it agree with reality?"

A person like Capesius is searching above everything else for truth. He finds no satisfaction in the question, "Does it agree with reality?" For he tells himself, "Is a matter of truth completely explained when you can say that it accords with the external world?" Things can really be true, and true and true again, as well as correct, and correct and ever correct, and still have as little relationship to reality as the truth of the little boy sent to buy rolls from the village baker. He figured out correctly that he would get five rolls for his ten kreuzers, but his figuring did not accord with reality; he practiced the same kind of thinking as the pedant who philosophizes about reality. You see, in that village, if you bought five rolls, you got an extra one thrown in — nothing to do with philosophy or logic, just plain reality.

In the same way Capesius is not interested in the question of how this or that idea or concept accords with reality. He asks first what the human soul perceives when it forms for itself a certain concept. The human soul, for one thing, perceives in mere external, everyday reality nothing more than emptiness, dryness, the tendency in itself continually to die. That is why Capesius so often needs the refreshment of Dame Felicia's fairy tales, needs exactly what is least true to outer reality but has substance that is real and is not necessarily true in the ordinary sense of the word. This substance of the fairy tale prepares him to find his way into the occult world.

In the fairy tale, there is something left to us humans that is like a grandchild of the clairvoyant experience of ancient human beings. It is within a form that is so lawful that no one who allows it to pour into his soul demands that its details accord with external reality. In fairy tale phantasy the poor boy, who has only a clever cat, has really also a palace obtruding directly into external reality. For every age, therefore, fairy tales can be a wonderful, spiritual nourishment. When we tell a child the *right* fairy tale, we enliven the child's soul so that it is led toward reality without always remaining glued to concepts true to everyday logic; such a relationship to reality dries up the soul and leaves it desolate. On the other hand, the soul can stay fresh and lively and able to penetrate the whole organism if, perceiving in the

lawful figures of a fairy tale what is real in the highest sense of the word, it is lifted up far above the ordinary world. Stronger in life, comprehending life more vigorously, will be the person who in childhood has had fairy tales working their way into his soul.

For Capesius, fairy tales stimulate imaginative knowledge. What works and weaves from them into his soul is not their content, not their plot, but rather how they take their course, how one motif moves into the next. A motif may induce certain powers of soul to strive upward, a second motif persuades other powers to venture downward, still others will induce the soul forces to mingle and intertwine upward and downward. It is through this that Capesius' soul comes into active movement; out of his soul will then emerge what enables him finally to see into the spiritual world. For many people, a fairy tale can be more stimulating than anything else. We will find in those that originated in earlier times motifs that show elements of ancient clairvoyance. The first tales did not begin by someone thinking them out; only the theories of modern professors of folklore explaining fairy tales begin like that. Fairy tales are never thought out; they are the final remains of ancient clairvoyance, experienced in dreams by human beings who still had that power. What was seen in a dream was told as a story — for instance, “Puss in Boots,” one version of which I have just related. All the fairy tales in existence are thus the last remnants of that original

clairvoyance. For this reason, a genuine fairy tale can be created only when — consciously or unconsciously — an imagination is present in the soul of the teller, an imagination that projects itself into the soul. Otherwise, it is not a true fairy tale. Any sort of thought-out tale can never be genuine. Here and there today, when a real fairy tale is created, it arises only because an ardent longing has awakened in the writer toward those ancient times mankind lived through so long ago. The longing exists, although sometimes it creeps into such secret soul crevices that the writer fails to recognize in what he can create consciously how much is rising out of these hidden soul depths, and also how much is disfigured by what he creates out of his modern consciousness.

Here I should like to point out the following. Nothing put into poetic form can actually ever be grounded in truth unless it turns essentially to such a longing — a longing that has to be satisfied and that longs for the ancient clairvoyant penetration into the world, or unless it can use a new, genuine clairvoyance that does not need to reveal itself completely but can flash up in the hidden depths of the soul, casting only a many-hued shadow. This relationship still exists. How many people today still feel the necessity of rhyme? Where there is rhyme, how many people feel how necessary it is? Today there is that dreadful method of reciting poetry that suppresses the rhyme as far as possible and emphasizes the meaning, that is, whatever accords with external reality. But

this element of poetry — rhyme — belongs to the stage of the development of language that existed at the time when the aftereffects of the ancient clairvoyance still prevailed.

Indeed, the end-rhyme belongs to the peculiar condition of soul expressing itself since man entered upon his modern development through the culture of the intellectual or feeling soul (*Verstandes- oder Gemütsseele*). Actually, the time in which the intellectual or feeling soul arose in men in the fourth post-Atlantean cultural epoch (747 B.C. to 1413 A.D.) is just the time when in poetry the memory dawned of earlier times that reach back into the ancient imaginative world. This dawning memory found its expression in the regular formation of the end- rhyme for what was lighting up in the intellectual or feeling soul; it was cultivated primarily by what developed in the fourth post-Atlantean epoch.

On the other hand, wherever the culture of the fourth epoch had penetrated, there was an incomparable refreshment through the effects of Christianity and the Mystery of Golgotha. It was this that poured into the European sentient soul. In the northern reaches of Europe, the culture of the sentient soul had remained in a backward state, waiting for a higher stage, the intellectual soul culture that advanced from the Mediterranean and Southern Europe. This took place over the whole period of the fourth epoch and beyond, in order that what had developed in Central and Southern Europe, and in

the Near East, could enter into the ancient sentient soul culture of Central Europe. There it could absorb the strength of will, the energy of will that comes to expression chiefly in the sentient soul culture. Thus, we see the end-rhyme regularly at home in the poetry of the South, and for the culture of the will that has already taken up Christianity, the other kind of rhyme — alliteration — as the appropriate mode of expression. In the alliterations of Northern and Central Europe we can feel the rolling, circling will pouring into the culture of the fourth epoch at its height, the culture of the intellectual or feeling soul.

It is astonishing that poets who want to bring to life, out of primeval soul forces in themselves, the memory of some primeval force in a particular sphere sometimes point back to the past in a quite haphazard fashion. This is the case with Wilhelm Jordan. [Wilhelm Jordan (1819-1904), *Nibelungen*, Canto One, *Sigfridsage*.] In his *Nibelungen* he wished to renew the ancient alliterations, and he achieved a remarkable effect as he wandered about like a bard, trying to resurrect the old mode of expression. People did not quite know what to make of it, because nowadays, in this intellectual time of ours, they think of speech as an expression only of meaning. People listen for the content of speech, not the effect that the sentient soul wants to obtain with alliteration, or that the intellectual soul wants to achieve with the end-rhyme. The consciousness soul really can no longer use any kind of

rhyme; a poet today must find other devices.

Fräulein von Sivers [Marie Steiner] will now let us hear a short example of alliteration that will characterize how the artist, Wilhelm Jordan, wished to bring about the renewal of ancient modes.

*Und es nahten die Nomen, von niemand gesehen,
Zu geräuschlosem Reigen und machten die Runde
Um diese Verlobten. Ein leiser Lufthauch,
Das war die Meinung der Minneberauschten,
Winde sich murmelnd herein zum Kamine;
Doch hinunter zur Nachtwelt, zu Nibelheims Tiefen,
Und hinauf zu den Wolken zu Walhalls Bewohnern
Erklang nun für andere als irdische Ohren
Vernehmlich wie Seesturm der Nomen Gesang:*

*Dein eigen ist alles,
Dein Heil wie dein Unheil,
Dein Wollen und Wähnen,
Dein Sinnen und Sein.
Wohl kommen, gekettet
In ewige Ordnung
Die Larven des Lebens,
Die Scharen des Scheins.
Sie ziehen die Zirkel,
Sie zeigen die Ziele,*

*Sie impfen den Abscheu,
Sie wecken den Wunsch;
Doch dein ist das Dünken,
Und wie du geworden,
So wirst du dich wenden,
Wir wissen die Wahl.*

Rough English Translation

And the Norns then came nearer but no one could see
them;
In soft silent steps they circled and swayed
Around the Betrothed — who, burning with love,
Thought a breath of sweet air was blowing about them;
While down to the night-world, in Nibelheim's nethermost,
And high in the heav'ns to the hosts of Valhalla
The Norns sang their song, for other than earth-ears
As clear as the clamorous raging of sea storms:

All is thine own:
Thy healing or hating,
Desires or delusions,
Thy thought and thy life.
Chained will come, cheerless,
In order eternal,
The hosts of the hidden,
The Larva of Life.

They mark out their measures,
They forecast fulfillment,
They implant raging passion,
Awaken the will.
Yet thine is the thinking,
The fashioning, forming,
The testing and turning:
We challenge thy choice.

Wilhelm Jordan really did bring the alliteration to life when he recited his poetry, but it is something that a modern person no longer can relate to completely. In order to agree sympathetically with what Jordan proposed as a kind of platform for his intentions, [In the 1925 German edition of this lecture there is the following footnote: "Translated into the language of spiritual science, one could say that Jordan wished instinctively to revive for the consciousness soul as poetry what the sentient soul had earlier developed quite naturally."] one has to experience those ancient times imaginatively in those of the present. It is much like bringing to mind all the happenings of these last few days in our auditorium in the *Architektenhaus* during the Annual Meeting, [December 10, 1911. Discussions took place on December 12, 14, 15.] and perceiving them shrouded in astral currents that make visible what was spoken there. Then one can also discover that what in these days repeatedly played into our efforts for knowledge and understanding is the pictorial

expression of a Jordan idea; that is, one could rightly understand what he set up as a kind of program to revive a mood that had held sway in the old Germanic world:

*... der Sprache Springquell ...
Bedarf nur der Leitung, um lauter und lieblich
Mit rauschendem Redestrom bis zum Rande
Der Vorzeit Gefäße wieder zu füllen
Und new zu verjüngen nach tausend Jahren
Die wundergewaltige uralte Weise
Der deutschen Dichtkunst.*

(The source of speech requires only guidance to fill again to the brim the ancient vessels with rushing streams of verse, sonorous and beautiful; and after a thousand years to bring anew to life the wonder and the power of the ancient German art of poetry.)

But to attain this goal, an ear is needed that can perceive the sounds of speech. This belongs intrinsically to the imaginations of the ancient clairvoyant epoch, for it was then that the feeling for sounds originated. But what is a speech sound? It is itself an imagination, an imaginative idea.

As long as you say *Licht* (light) and *Luft* (air) and can think only of the brightness of the one and the wafting movement of the other, you have not yet an imagination. But the words themselves are imaginations. As soon as you can feel their

imaginative power, you will perceive in a word like *Licht*, with the vowel sound “ee” predominating, a radiant, unbounded brightness; in *Luft*, with its vowel sound “oo,” a wholeness, an abundance. Because a ray of light is a thin fullness and the air an abundant fullness, the alliterating “l” expresses the family relationship of fullness. It is not unimportant whether you put together words that alliterate, such as *Licht* and *Luft*, or do not alliterate; it is not unimportant whether you string together the names of brothers or whether you put them together in such a way that the hearer or reader feels that cosmic will has brought them together, as in Gunther, Gemot, Giseler. Such an ancient imagination the sentient soul could perceive in the alliteration.

In the end-rhyme the intellectual soul could recognize itself as part of the ancient imagination. When language is made alive, its effects can be felt in the soul even into our dreams, where it can secrete certain imaginations for a person to become aware of in dream. These imaginations appear also to clairvoyance, correctly characterizing, for instance, the four elements. It does not always hold good, but if someone truly feels what, for example, *Licht* and *Luft* are, and lets this enter into a dream, there often blossoms out of the dream-fantasy something that can lead to a characterization of those elements, light and air. Human beings will not become aware of the secrets of language until it is led back to its origin, led back, in fact, to imaginative perception. Language actually

originated in the time when man was not yet a “poor boy” but also when man had not yet a clever cat. In a way, he still lived attached to the Giant, imagination, and out of the Giant’s limbs he was aware of the audible imagination imbuing each sound. When a tone is laid hold of by the imagination, then the sound originates, the actual sound of speech.

These are the things I wanted to bring to you today, in a rather unpretentious and disconnected way, in order to show how we must bring to life again what mankind once lost but that has been rescued for our time. Just as Capesius wins his way to it, we must win it back, so that human beings can grow rightly into the era just ahead of us and find their way into higher worlds, thus truly to participate in them.